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MISS JULIE  
LADY WINDERMERE'S FAN  
THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

THE PLAYBOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD

Strindberg  
*translated by Michael Meyer*  
Wilde

Syngé

*Henrik Ibsen*

THE WILD DUCK

*Translated from the Norwegian by  
MICHAEL MEYER*



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## *Henrik Johan Ibsen*

- 1828 Born at Skien in south-east Norway on 20th March, the second child of Knud Ibsen, a merchant, and his wife Marichen, *née* Altenburg.
- 1834-5 Father becomes ruined. The family moves to Venstoep, a few miles outside Skien.
- 1844 Ibsen (aged fifteen) becomes assistant to an apothecary at Grimstad, a tiny seaport farther down the coast. Stays there for six years in great poverty.
- 1846 Has an illegitimate son with a servant girl, Else Sofie Jensdatter.
- 1849 Writes his first play, CATILINE (in verse).
- 1850 Leaves Grimstad to become a student in Christiania (now Oslo). Writes second play, THE WARRIOR'S BARROW.
- 1851 Is invited to join Ole Bull's newly formed National Theatre at Bergen. Does so, and stays six years, writing, directing, designing costumes and keeping the accounts.
- 1852 Visits Copenhagen and Dresden to learn about the theatre. Writes ST JOHN'S EVE, a romantic comedy in verse and prose.
- 1853 ST JOHN'S EVE acted at Bergen. Failure.
- 1854 Writes LADY INGER OF OESTRAAT, an historical tragedy in prose.
- 1855 LADY INGER OF OESTRAAT acted at Bergen. Failure. Writes THE FEAST AT SOLHAUG, another romantic verse-and-prose comedy.

- 1856 THE FEAST AT SOLHAUG acted at Bergen. His first success. Meets Suzannah Thoresen. Writes OLAF LILJEKRANS, a third verse-and-prose comedy.
- 1857 OLAF LILJEKRANS acted at Bergen. Failure. Leaves Bergen to become artistic manager of the Christiania Norwegian Theatre. Writes THE VIKINGS AT HELGELAND, an historical prose tragedy.
- 1858 Marries Suzannah Thoresen. THE VIKINGS AT HELGELAND staged. Small success.
- 1859 His only child, Sigurd, born.
- 1860-1 Years of poverty and despair. Unable to write.
- 1862 Writes LOVE'S COMEDY, a modern verse satire, his first play for five years. It is rejected by his own theatre, which goes bankrupt.
- 1863 Ibsen gets part-time job as literary adviser to the Danish-controlled Christiania Theatre. Extremely poor. Applies unsuccessfully to Government for financial support. Resorts to moneylenders. Writes THE PRETENDERS, another historical prose tragedy. Is granted a travel stipend by the Government; this is augmented by a collection raised by Bjoernson and other friends.
- 1864 THE PRETENDERS staged in Christiania. A success. He leaves Norway and settles in Rome. Remains resident abroad for the next twenty-seven years. Begins EMPEROR AND GALILEAN.
- 1865 Writes BRAND, in verse (as a play for reading, not acting), in Rome and Ariccia.
- 1866 BRAND published. Immense success; Ibsen becomes famous throughout Scandinavia (but it is not acted for nineteen years).
- 1867 Writes PEER GYNT, in verse (also to be read, not acted), in Rome, Ischia and Sorrento. It, too, is a great success; but is not staged for seven years.

- 1868 Moves from Rome and settles in Dresden.
- 1869 Attends opening of Suez Canal as Norwegian delegate. Completes **THE LEAGUE OF YOUTH**, a modern prose comedy.
- 1871 Revises his shorter poems and issues them in a volume. His farewell to verse; for the rest of his life he publishes exclusively in prose.
- 1873 Completes (after nine years) **EMPEROR AND GALILEAN**, his last historical play. Begins to be known in Germany and England.
- 1874 Returns briefly to Norway for first time in ten years. The students hold a torchlight procession in his honour.
- 1875 Leaves Dresden after seven years and settles in Munich. Begins **THE PILLARS OF SOCIETY**, the first of his twelve great modern prose dramas.
- 1876 **PEER GYNT** staged for first time. **THE VIKINGS AT HELGELAND** is performed in Munich, the first of his plays to be staged outside Scandinavia.
- 1877 Completes **THE PILLARS OF SOCIETY**. This makes him famous in Germany, where it is widely acted.
- 1878 Returns for one year to Italy.
- 1879 Writes **A DOLL'S HOUSE** in Rome and Amalfi. It causes an immediate sensation, and makes Ibsen internationally famous. Returns to Munich for a year.
- 1880 Resettles in Italy for a further five years. First performance of an Ibsen play in England (**THE PILLARS OF SOCIETY** for a single matinée in London).
- 1881 Writes **GHOSTS** in Rome and Sorrento. Violently attacked; all theatres reject it, and bookshops return it to the publisher.
- 1882 Writes **AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE** in Rome. Cordially received. **GHOSTS** receives its first performance (in Chicago), and is staged at last in Europe.

- 1884 Writes **THE WILD DUCK** in Rome and Gossensass. It, and all his subsequent plays, were regarded as obscure and were greeted with varying degrees of bewilderment.
- 1885 Revisits Norway again, for the first time since 1874. Leaves Rome and resettles in Munich.
- 1886 Writes **ROSMERSHOLM** in Munich.
- 1888 Writes **THE LADY FROM THE SEA** in Munich.
- 1889 Meets and becomes infatuated with the eighteen-year-old Emilie Bardach in Gossensass. Does not see her again, but the experience shadows the remainder of his writing. Janet Achurch acts Nora in London, the first major English-speaking production of Ibsen.
- 1890 Writes **HEDDA GABLER** in Munich.
- 1891 Returns to settle permanently in Norway.
- 1892 Writes **THE MASTER BUILDER** in Christiania.
- 1894 Writes **LITTLE EYOLF** in Christiania.
- 1896 Writes **JOHN GABRIEL BORKMAN** in Christiania.
- 1899 Writes **WHEN WE DEAD AWAKEN** in Christiania.
- 1901 First stroke. Partly paralysed.
- 1903 Second stroke. Left largely helpless.
- 1906 Dies in Christiania on 23rd May, aged seventy-eight.

## *Introduction*

On 11th January 1883 Ibsen wrote from Rome to his publisher, Frederik Hegel: 'I am already at work again planning a new play about contemporary life. It will be in four acts, and I hope to be able to get down to the actual writing within a couple of months at most. The Italian air, and the pleasant way of life down here, greatly increase my eagerness to create. I find it much easier to work here than in Germany.'

Ibsen was now fifty-four, and the reception of *Ghosts* in Scandinavia a year earlier might well have deterred a less resilient spirit than his from setting pen to paper for some while. It had been reviled, not merely by the conservative press, which he had expected, but also by the radical press; even such an old admirer as Henrik Jæger had lectured against it, and Hegel had been forced to take back large quantities of the book from booksellers who refused to stock it; indeed, it was thirteen years before the first printing of ten thousand copies was sold out. The theatres of Christiania, Copenhagen and Stockholm had been unanimous in declaring it unfit for public presentation.

So far from being silenced by this reception, however, Ibsen had reacted swiftly with the most buoyant play he had written since *Peer Gynt*. *An Enemy of the People* was immediately accepted by the Christiania Theatre, the management of which seems not to have appreciated, or to have been insensitive to, the fact that its theme was the unworthiness of 'those who do not dare' and its conclusion: 'The strongest man is he who stands alone.' The play was in its last days of rehearsal when Ibsen wrote to Hegel with plans for its successor.

In the event, it was to be another fifteen months before he began the actual writing of *The Wild Duck*, and a further eleven weeks of intensive revision before he completed it. The slowness and difficulty with which it took shape contrasts

markedly with the swiftness and ease with which he had written *An Enemy of the People*. *The Wild Duck* represented yet another departure into new country. Just as he had abandoned poetic drama as soon as he had mastered it in *Peer Gynt*, so now he threw aside almost contemptuously the new anti-poetic, anti-symbolic form which he had perfected in *A Doll's House*, *Ghosts* and *An Enemy of the People*. He explained his restlessness and passion for experiment in a letter to Georg Brandes that summer (12th June 1883):

'An intellectual pioneer,' he wrote, 'can never gather a majority about him. In ten years the majority may have reached the point where Dr Stockmann stood when the people held their meeting. But during those ten years the Doctor has not remained stationary; he is still at least ten years ahead of the others. The majority, the masses, the mob, will never catch him up; he can never rally them behind him. I myself feel a similarly unrelenting compulsion to keep pressing forward. A crowd now stands where I stood when I wrote my earlier books. But I myself am there no longer. I am somewhere else - far ahead of them - or so I hope. At present I am struggling with the draft of a new play in four acts. As time passes, various mad ideas gather in one's head, and one must find some outlet for them. Though since it won't deal with the High Court, or the absolute veto, or even the "pure" flag,<sup>1</sup> it is hardly likely to arouse any interest in Norway. However, I hope it may obtain a hearing in other quarters.'

Ibsen does not seem to have made any progress with *The Wild Duck* during the remainder of 1883, apart from a few pages of rough notes and a provisional list of characters. On 22nd January 1884 he wrote to Laura Grundtvig: 'I have been having one of those periods when I can only with the greatest reluctance sit down to my desk.' On 21st April, however, he was able to send better tidings to his publisher. 'The political complications in Norway,' he wrote to Hegel, 'have prevented me all this winter from working seriously, and with undivided attention, on my new play. But now at last I have managed to free my mind from this chaos, and am writing at

<sup>1</sup> i.e. without the mark of union with Sweden.

full stretch. The first act will be finished this week, and I reckon that by the middle of June I should be able to let you know that the play is ready.'

He completed Act One according to schedule; his manuscript draft of this act is dated 20th–28th April 1884. On 2nd May he began Act Two; but when he was half-way through it, he stopped, and started to rewrite the play from the beginning. By 24th May he had completed Acts One and Two in their new form. Act Three occupied him from 25th–30th May; Act Four from 2nd–8th June; and Act Five from 9th–13th June. The following day, 14th June 1884, he wrote to Hegel:

'I am glad to be able to tell you that yesterday I completed the draft of my new play. It comprises five acts and will, as far as I can calculate, occupy some two hundred printed pages, possibly a little more. It still remains for me to make the fair copy and I shall start on that tomorrow. As usual, however, this will involve not just copying the draft but a comprehensive rewriting of the dialogue. So it will take time. Still, unless some unforeseen obstacle presents itself I reckon the whole manuscript should be in your hands by mid-September. The play doesn't touch on political or social problems, or indeed any matters of public import. It takes place entirely within the confines of family life. I dare say it will arouse some discussion; but it can't offend anyone.'

On 30th June, he left Rome for the little mountain resort of Gossensass in the Tyrol, which was later to prove so fateful to him. There he settled down in his usual strictly methodical manner to revise the play.

'My routine,' he wrote to his wife on 4th July 1884, 'has so far been as follows. Rise at six-thirty; breakfast brought up half an hour later; then I go out while they do the room; then write from nine to one. Then lunch, with a ravenous appetite. In the afternoons, too, I have managed to write a little, or at any rate do groundwork. The second act will be ready in five to six days. I am not drinking any beer; which suits me well. But I am drinking milk, and a little – not much – white wine, with water. A light evening meal at seven-thirty. Up to now

I have been in bed each evening by ten, and have been sleeping well.'

Ibsen's wife and son were holidaying in Norway, and his fairly frequent letters to them enable us to date the progress of his revision. He finished Act Two in its final form on 12th July. Act Three took him from 14th July until either 29th or 30th July; Act Four was ready by 17th August. On 27th August he wrote to his son, Sigurd: 'My play is now fast nearing its conclusion. In three to four days it will be ready; then I shall read it through carefully and send it off. I take great joy in working on this play; it grows all the time in little details, and I shall miss it when I have to part from it; though, at the same time, I shall be glad . . . The German sculptor Professor Kopf, from Rome, has with him a thirteen-year-old daughter who is the most perfect model for my Hedvig that could be imagined; she is pretty, has a serious face and manner, and is a little *gefrasig*.' Three days later, on 30th August, he wrote to his wife: 'Although I don't know when or where my letters reach you, while you continue to move from town to town, I must nevertheless send you the good news that I have just finished my manuscript. The play will be very rich in content, and bigger than any other of my recent works. I have said everything I wanted to say; and I don't think it could easily have been said better. Now to the business of reading it through, which will take two to three days; then off it goes to Hegel.'

On 2nd September he wrote to Hegel (still from Gossensass). 'I enclose the manuscript of my new play, *The Wild Duck*, which has occupied me daily for the past four months, and from which I cannot now part without a certain feeling of loss. The characters in it have, despite their many failings, grown dear to me as a result of this long daily association. But I cherish the hope that they will also find good friends and well-wishers among the great reading public and, not least, among theatre folk; for they all, without exception, offer rewarding opportunities. But the study and representation of them will not be found easy. . . . This new play occupies, in some ways, a unique position among my dramatic works. Its

method differs in certain respects from that which I have previously employed. However, I don't wish to enlarge on that subject here. The critics will, I trust, see this for themselves; at any rate, they will find something to argue about, something to construe. I believe, too, that *The Wild Duck* may possibly tempt some of our younger dramatists to explore new territories, and this I regard as a desirable thing.'

Hegel's firm, Gyldendal of Copenhagen, published *The Wild Duck* on 11th November 1884 in a printing of eight thousand copies. This sold so quickly that a new edition appeared on 1st December. The play received its première on 9th January 1885, at Bergen; before the month was out it had also been staged in Christiania, Helsinki and Stockholm, and the following month it was presented in Copenhagen. Germany, surprisingly, had to wait three years to see the play; its German première was on 4th March 1888 at the Residenztheater, Berlin. Berne, Wiesbaden and Dresden saw it in 1889, and Paris in 1891, when Antoine staged it at the Théâtre Libre (the only Ibsen play, apart from *Ghosts*, which he presented there). William Archer had not yet begun his association with Janet Achurch and J. T. Grein, and it was not performed in London until 1894.

*The Wild Duck* greatly perplexed Norwegian readers when it first appeared. 'The public does not know what to make of it,' commented the *Christiansia Intelligentsedler*. 'One paper says one thing and the other just the opposite.' *Aftenposten* complained: 'One may study and study to find what Ibsen wants to say, and not find it.' *Morgenbladet* found the plot 'as queer as it is thin. . . . The total impression can hardly be other than a strong sense of emptiness and unpleasantness.' *Bergens Tidende* thought the play proved Ibsen's inferiority to Bjørnson. 'He does not speak from the depths of his heart as does Bjørnson. He does not make demands of the individual with the same strength, he has no faith in his own ability to ennoble humanity by means of his writings. He states the problems excellently as he sees them, but makes no attempt to show the way beyond them: he chastises as one who has authority, but makes no demand for improvement.' The only newspaper

critic in Norway who seemed to appreciate the point of the play was Irgens Hansen in *Dagbladet*; he recognized that Ibsen 'here stands on humanity's ground and speaks humanity's cause, even though it be the cause of a very shabby humanity'.

Across the North Sea, Ibsen's admirers were equally baffled. His earliest English champion, Edmund Gosse, condemned it in the *Fortnightly Review* as 'a strange, melancholy and pessimistic drama, almost without a ray of light from beginning to end . . . There is really not a character in the book that inspires confidence or liking . . . There can be no doubt that it is by far the most difficult of Ibsen's dramas for a reader to comprehend.' Gosse himself does not seem to have comprehended it very well, for he concluded that 'the ideal spirit of goodness is the untamed bird in its close and miserable garret, captive to circumstances and with no hope of escape'. William Archer also failed to understand it at first, though he later came to admire it greatly, and named it 'Ibsen's greatest play'. Arthur Symons thought it 'a play of inferior quality', and Havelock Ellis dismissed it as 'the least remarkable of Ibsen's plays'. Almost the only critic to see the point of the play during the next ten years was Bernard Shaw, who devoted to it one of his most penetrating passages in *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*:

'After *An Enemy of the People*, Ibsen . . . left the vulgar ideals for dead and set about the exposure of those of the choicer spirits, beginning with the incorrigible idealists who had idealized his very self, and were becoming known as Ibsenites. His first move in this direction was such a tragic-comic slaughtering of sham Ibsenism that his astonished victims plaintively declared that *The Wild Duck*, as the new play was called, was a satire on his former works; while the pious, whom he had disappointed so severely by his interpretation of *Brand* . . . began to hope that he was coming back repentant to the fold.'

Shaw concluded: 'The busybody [i.e. Gregers] finds that people cannot be freed from their failings from without. They must free themselves.'

*The Wild Duck* at first received a mixed reception on the stage. It was admired in Christiania, thanks largely to Arnoldus Reimers's rendering of Hjalmar; but it was hissed in Helsinki. In Stockholm, at that time the most theatrically enlightened of the Scandinavian capitals, it aroused deep interest, not least because the production was so daringly realistic as to include real doors with actual handles and even, which caused a great buzz, a commode in Hjalmar's studio. When it was staged in Rome in January 1892, the audience became so irritated by Gregers's behaviour that they harassed the unfortunate actor who played him with shouts of 'Basta!' and 'Imbecile!' while at the Paris première at the Théâtre Libre some of the spectators showed their displeasure by quacking like ducks. As an illustration of how little people understood the play, Francisque Sarcey, the famous critic of *Le Temps*, thought that Hedvig had shot herself out of grief because the wild duck was dead. And when the play was presented in London in 1894 by J. T. Grein, Clement Scott wrote: 'To call such an eccentricity as this a masterpiece, to classify it at all as dramatic literature, or to make a fuss about so feeble a production, is to insult dramatic literature and outrage common-sense.'

A few people, fortunately, perceived the play's qualities. William Archer, reviewing that same production which had so offended Clement Scott, admitted that the play had, in prim, baffled him. 'I came to the theatre,' he declared, 'if not precisely prejudiced again... the undertaking, at least with the gravest misgivings as to the probable result... Yet, as "the tragedy of the House of Ekdal" unfolded itself, with that smooth, unhasting, unresting movement which is Ibsen's greatest invention in the technical sphere – every word at once displaying a soul-facet and developing the dramatic situation – despite my long familiarity with the play, I felt almost as though a new planet had swum into my ken. I had been told, but had scarcely believed, that *The Wild Duck* was one of Ibsen's most effective stage-plays... I was utterly mistaken. The play now proved itself scenic in the highest degree... Hardly ever before, as it seemed to me, had I seen so much of

the very quintessence of life concentrated in the brief traffic of the stage.'

When the play was revived in London three years later, Bernard Shaw wrote a famous eulogy of it in *The Saturday Review*. 'Where,' he asked, 'shall I find an epithet magnificent enough for *The Wild Duck*? To sit there getting deeper and deeper into that Ekdal home, and getting deeper and deeper into your own life all the time, until you forget that you are in a theatre; to look on with horror and pity at a profound tragedy, shaking with laughter all the time at an irresistible comedy; to go out, not from a diversion, but from an experience deeper than real life ever brings to most men, or often brings to any man; that is what *The Wild Duck* was like last Monday at the Globe.' Subsequent generations have shared Shaw's opinion, and *The Wild Duck* now shares with *A Doll's House*, *Ghosts*, *Hedda Gabler* and *The Master Builder* the honour of being the most frequently staged of Ibsen's plays.

A rich quantity of Ibsen's draft material for the play has survived: nine sets of notes, the unfinished first draft (comprising one and a half acts) and the full second draft, which differs considerably from the final version. The first set of notes, undated but probably written in late 1882 or early 1883, contains a quantity of aphorisms, often rather vapid, but is chiefly of interest in that it shows Ibsen making his first sketches for the characters of Hjalmar and Gregers. Hjalmar seems to have been originally based on a photographer named Edvard Larsen with whom Ibsen had lodged in earlier days, and who had taken the oldest known photograph of him (in 1861-62).

'E.L. . . . is a naïve and pretentious pessimist, devoid of energy, an idle dreamer . . . [His] marriage with a simple wife has, in one way, been a "true" marriage, in that it has caused him to shrink, or at any rate stopped him developing. Now he can't manage without her; or she without him . . . He has to spend the evening with people of quality. It bores and irritates him. He longs to get back to his own narrow, homely surroundings . . . Like A. the printer [Aslaksen of *The League of*

Youth and *An Enemy of the People*] he has been afforded a glimpse into a higher world; that is his tragedy . . . "The sixth sense." Magnetic [i.e. hypnotic] influence is E.L.'s favourite subject . . . Photographer, failed poet, dreams of a socialist revolution, the revolution of the future, of science. Poison in the breakfast . . . Is a socialist at heart but dares not admit it; he has a family, and so is not free.'

Gregers was at first based on the Norwegian novelist and playwright, Alexander Kielland (1849-1906), whose radicalism Ibsen appears to have regarded as bogus:

'A.K., the sybarite, enjoys an aesthetic indignation at poverty and misery. Enjoys his visits to his old schoolfriend who has come down in the world, without realizing why he enjoys them . . . A.K.-d.: to lie tucked up in a soft bed with a well-filled belly and hear the rain pouring down and think of difficult journeys in the wet and cold, is a great pleasure.'

As Ibsen's plans developed, however, Hjalmar and Gregers became more and more different from the E.L. and A.K.-d. of these first notes. The Gregers we know has little in common with the character of A.K.-d. as sketched here. It is the contrast between the two characters rather than the characters themselves which has survived into the play. The rich man's son visiting his old schoolfellow who has come down in the world seems to have been the idea which first ignited Ibsen's imagination. Gregers gradually developed into a kind of *reductio ad absurdum* of Dr Stockmann, the hero of Ibsen's preceding play - a living illustration of the danger of a single-minded pursuit of truth if not tempered by common-sense and an understanding of human limitations. Similarly, Ibsen soon found Edvard Larsen inadequate as a model for Hjalmar, and borrowed characteristics from two other Norwegians of his acquaintance, a poet named Kristofer Janson and, especially, a failed artist, Magnus Bagge, from whom Ibsen had taken drawing lessons around 1860. Halvdan Koht has said of Bagge that he had 'a constant longing to lift himself above everyday prose'; it was typical of him that when he went to live in Germany he called himself von Bagge. Hjalmar's mode of speech was fairly ordinary at first; it is only in

the final (third) draft that it acquires its peculiarly florid quality and its excess of adjectives. He is perhaps the most difficult of all Ibsen's characters to translate, at any rate in the prose dramas.

Hedvig, in Ibsen's early notes, is described as being 'drawn to the sea'. There is a reference to 'the first time she saw a big expanse of water looking down from a height', and a note that 'Human beings are sea-creatures – like the wild duck – not land creatures. Gregers was made for the sea. In time, all people will live on it, when the land becomes swallowed up. Then family life will cease.' Ibsen discarded these ideas from *The Wild Duck*, but returned to them two plays later in *The Lady from the Sea*. Hedvig's impending blindness was an afterthought. There is no reference to it until the final draft; indeed, until that draft she is rather a commonplace child. Hjalmar's 'invention', too, which figures so largely in the play as we know it, is barely touched on in the preliminary drafts. Ibsen, in a letter to Georg Brandes (25th June 1884), described his revisionary work as 'polishing the language and giving a sharper individuality to the characters and dialogue' and, as William Archer remarked: 'Everywhere, on a close comparison of the texts, we see an intensive imagination lighting up, as it were, what was at first somewhat cold and colourless. In this case, as in many others, the draft suggests a transparency before the electricity has been switched on.'

*The Wild Duck* is full of echoes from Ibsen's own childhood. The family home at Venstøp had contained a library of old books left, like the ones in the Ekdals' loft, by a previous owner of the house known as 'The Flying Dutchman', a Norwegian who had been a prison convict in England and a slave in the Barbary States, and had died the year Ibsen was born. These books had included *Harrison's* (or, as Ibsen originally wrote it, *Harryson's*) *History of London* (1775), which so delighted Hedvig. Hedvig herself seems to have got her name, and probably some of her character, from Ibsen's favourite sister, Hedvig; and old Ekdal contains many traits of the playwright's father, Knud Ibsen, who had been a lieutenant in the militia and a great huntsman before he went

bankrupt and brought the family name into disgrace. Ibsen also borrowed certain details from a trial which had caused a sensation during his student days in Christiania, when an army officer accused of embezzlement had tried unsuccessfully to shoot himself. (He was to return to this source for much of his material for *John Gabriel Borkman*.) And, perhaps the most significant echo from Ibsen's past, at the age of eighteen he had, like Haakon Werle, given a servant girl an illegitimate child.

Wherein does the 'method' of *The Wild Duck* differ, as Ibsen told Hegel, from that which he had previously employed? At first sight there is no immediately obvious difference; it seems, like *A Doll's House*, *Ghosts* and *An Enemy of the People*, to be a realistic play about realistic people, and the method seems to be his old method of raking over apparently dead ashes and exposing the live embers beneath. The symbolism? But Ibsen had used symbolism at least as freely in *Brand*.

Nevertheless, I think there is little doubt that it was the symbolism in *The Wild Duck* to which Ibsen was referring when he wrote of a new method. In *Brand* the symbols are incidental to the play, or at any rate are not fully integrated into it. The ice-church and the hawk are left deliberately imprecise; there is room for intelligent argument about their meaning; perhaps, indeed, they are intended to mean different things to different people. In *The Wild Duck*, however, there is a single and precise symbol, that of the bird itself; and, so far from being incidental to the play, it is the hub and heart of it. *Brand* is a play into which symbols have worked their way; *The Wild Duck* is a play dependent on, and held together by, a symbol; as though the wild duck were a magnet and the characters in the play so many iron filings held together by this centripetal force. This was not a method that Ibsen was to use invariably in his subsequent plays; *Rosmersholm*, for example, and *Hedda Gabler* seem to me to have more in common with *Ghosts* than with *The Wild Duck*. But we find him returning to it in the later plays; the towers and spires in *The Master Builder* and the crutch in *Little Eyolf* serve a similar

structural purpose to the wild duck. They are images from which the characters cannot escape, any more than the iron filings can escape the magnet.

Ibsen probably borrowed the image of the wild duck from a poem called *The Sea Bird* by Johan Sebastian Welhaven which describes how a wild duck is wounded and dives down to die on the sea-bed; and Professor Francis Bull suggests that he may also have been influenced by Darwin's account in *The Origin of Species* of how wild ducks degenerate in captivity. Some astonishing theories have been advanced as to what the bird is intended to stand for. Surely Ibsen makes it abundantly clear that he intended it as a double symbol with two precise and obvious references. Firstly, it is, like Hedvig, a by-product of Haakon Werle's fondness for sport which has been rejected by him and is now cared for by the Ekdal family. Secondly, with a more general application, it represents the refusal of most people, once they have been wounded, to go on living and face reality. Both Hjalmar and his father have sought to hide themselves in the deep blue sea of illusion, and Gregers, like the 'damned clever dog' trained by his father, hauls them back to the surface. The cynics (Relling and Haakon Werle) watch this operation; so do the two sensible, earthbound women, Gina and Mrs Soerby. These women, Ibsen seems to imply, offer the only real refuge: love. Mrs Soerby can save Haakon Werle, despite Gregers's cynicism, just as she could have saved Relling, who had also once loved her; Relling knows this, and it is hinted that the loss of her is partly responsible for his having turned into a drunkard. And Gina, if Gregers had not intervened, could have saved Hjalmar. Yet Ibsen leaves a question mark here; is love simply another illusion, like the Ekdals' lost? And if so, then is not the illusion of the lost justified, just as much as the illusion of love?

At the same time, while the wild duck has these two specific significances within the play, it is possible that, consciously or unconsciously, it also reflects Ibsen's impression of himself when he wrote it; one who has forgotten what it means to live wild, and has grown plump and tame and content with his basket; as unlike the author of *Brand* as the duck is unlike the

19096  
10.5.72

hawk of the earlier play, of which, too, the climax had been a shot fired at (or supposedly at) a bird by a girl of fourteen. How far, Ibsen must have asked himself – and he was to ask the question again, through Allmers in *Little Eyolf* and Rubek in *When We Dead Awaken* – does the artist, like the Ekdals, shut himself off from life? Is his world so very different from their loft with its imitations of reality? Which is the more cowardly refuge, the Ekdals' loft or Brand's ice-church?

Hjalmar and Gregers both represent different aspects of Ibsen; on the one hand the evader of reality, on the other the impractical idealist who pesters mankind with his 'claims of the ideal' because he has a sick conscience and despises himself. How far, one wonders, did Ibsen identify himself with Gregers in that curious episode when the latter, finding that the stove smokes, throws water on it to put out the fire and only makes the stink worse? He had already portrayed these two conflicting aspects of himself in *Brand* and *Peer Gynt*, and the conflict between Gregers and Hjalmar is as though Brand and Peer Gynt had been brought face to face.

Two main dangers confront anyone who produces *The Wild Duck*; the temptation to play Hjalmar as ridiculous and farcical, and the temptation to play Gregers as spiteful. A perusal of the notices of London productions of the play during the past seventy years reveals how often actors and producers have fallen into these traps. Ibsen foresaw the danger of Hjalmar being made a figure of fun, and warned against it in a letter which he wrote to H. Schroeder, the manager of the Christiania Theatre, on 14th November 1884. 'Hjalmar,' he wrote, 'must not be played with any trace of parody. The actor must never for a moment show that he is conscious that there is anything funny in what he says. His voice has, as Relling observes, something endearing about it, and this quality must be clearly brought out. His sentimentality is honest, his melancholy, in its way, attractive; no hint of affectation. Between ourselves, I would suggest you cast your mind towards Kristofor Janson, who still contrives to give an effect of beauty whatever drivel he may be uttering.'

There is a pointer for whoever plays the part . . . Where can one find a Hedvig? I don't know. And Mrs Soerby? She must be beautiful and witty, *not* vulgar . . . Gregers is the most difficult part in the play, from the acting point of view. Sometimes I think Hammer would be best, sometimes Bjoern B. . . I hope you will spare me Isachsen, as he always carries on like some strange actor instead of like an ordinary human being. However, I suppose he might possibly make something out of Molvik's few lines. The two servants must not be cast too casually; Pettersen might possibly be played by Bucher, and Jensen by Abelsted, if the latter is not required for one of the dinner guests. Yes, those guests! What about them? You can't just use ordinary extras; they'd ruin the whole act . . . This play demands absolute naturalness and truthfulness both in the ensemble work and in the staging. The lighting, too, is important; it is different for each act, and is calculated to establish the particular atmosphere of that act. I just wanted to pass on these random reflections. As regards everything else, please do as you think best.'

Further evidence of Ibsen's anxiety that his actors should not overstep the boundary dividing comedy from farce is given in an account by P. A. Rosenberg of a conversation which he and some acquaintances had with Ibsen in Copenhagen fourteen years later (3rd April 1898). 'Ibsen spoke also of the Royal Theatre's presentation of *The Wild Duck*, of which strangely enough he did not approve. The rest of us were unanimous in praising Bloch's masterly *mise-en-scène*, Mrs Henning's enchanting Hedvig, Olaf Poulsen's Old Ekdal and Miss Anthonsen's incomparable Gina. But Ibsen declared it had been played too much for farce. "It must be played as tragi-comedy," he said, "otherwise Hedvig's death makes no sense."'

Gina is misinterpreted almost as frequently as Hjalmar and Gregers. She is, contrary to common supposition, neither a slut nor a whore. There is no evidence that she ever slept with anyone but Werle before her marriage, or that she allowed him to have his way with her more than once. She is a perfectly decent working-class girl who was pestered into bed by her

employer. As regards her evasive answer to Hjalmar's question whether he or Werle is Hedvig's father (a question to which we, no more than she, ever know the answer; Hjalmar's mother as well as Werle had weak eyes); the implication of Gina's reply is not clear in the original, but I take it to mean that she is irregular in her periods, had missed one after yielding to old Werle, and he, fearing she might be pregnant, had hastened to match her up with Hjalmar. The child, when it appeared, could thus have belonged to either man.

Hedvig is usually played as a pretty girl, and there is nothing in the text that positively contradicts this; but the play is far more moving if she is plain and gawky. Then, when her father rejects her, she has nothing in life to look forward to. If she is the kind of girl whom any young man would admire, her predicament is much less distressing. Hjalmar, as Ibsen reminded Schroeder, must not appear obviously ridiculous; he is not really more self-deluding than a good many husbands. As Bernard Shaw remarked, Hjalmar should, at first, impose on us. William Archer shrewdly added that he 'should be a quite smileless personage. His melancholy is as superficial as his other emotions, but he cultivates it too sedulously to permit of his smiling. Besides, he never sees anything to smile at.'

Gregers must not be seen as a Machiavellian destroyer. He is that much more dangerous figure, a well-meaning and misguided zealot; and he needs to be, as Gina describes him, ugly. Mis Soerby, as Ibsen implied in the letter quoted above, is no more a whore than Gina; she, too, is a perfectly decent woman who, given the chance, will make an excellent a wife to old Werle as Gina has been to Hjalmar. Old Ekdal should not be a nincompoop, but a fine figure of a man, a huge and impressive old soldier. We should believe him when he says he has been a famous hunter, and his reduction to a player of children's games is then much more frightening. Finally, to pick up another point in Ibsen's letter to Schroeder, the servants are, like all Ibsen's servants, sharply differentiated. Pettersen is a butler, used to and imitative of the gentry; Jensen is a hired servant, unaccustomed to waiting in so grand a house.

As a postscript, one may remark how in *The Wild Duck*, as in almost every play he wrote, Ibsen anticipated one of the main discoveries of modern psychology. 'Liberation,' he had noted in his preliminary jottings, 'consists in securing for individuals the right to free themselves, each according to his particular need.' To free *themselves*; how many of Ibsen's contemporaries who regarded themselves as revolutionaries realized that? Ibsen understood that the demand must come from within, and that truth, if it comes from without, is often regarded as an attack on the defensive system which the 'life-lie' represents.

MICHAEL MEYER

## CHARACTERS

HAAKON WERLE, a wholesale merchant

GREGERS WERLE, his son

OLD EKDAL

HJALMAR EKDAL, his son, a photographer

GINA EKDAL, HJALMAR's wife

HEDVIG, their daughter, aged fourteen

MRS SOERBY, housekeeper to HAAKON WERLE

RELLING, a doctor

MOLVIK, sometime student of theology

GRAABERG, a clerk

PETTERSEN, servant to HAAKON WERLE

JENSEN, a hired waiter

A PALE, FLABBY GENTLEMAN

A BALDING GENTLEMAN

A SHORT-SIGHTED GENTLEMAN

SIX OTHER GENTLEMEN, dinner guests of

HAAKON WERLE

SEVERAL HIRED WAITERS

The first act takes place in HAAKON WERLE's house, the remaining four acts in HJALMAR EKDAL's studio.



## Act One

*The home of HAAKON WERLE, a wholesale merchant. A study, expensively and comfortably furnished; bookcases, upholstered furniture. A desk, with papers and ledgers on it, stands in the middle of the room. Lighted lamps with green shades throw a soft light. In the rear wall folding doors stand open; the curtains across the entrance are drawn aside, and within can be seen a large and elegant room, brilliantly lit by lamps and candelabra. Downstage left, a fireplace with coals glowing in it. Upstage of this a double door leads to the dining room.*

*WERLE's servant, PETTERSEN, in livery, and a hired waiter, JENSEN, in black, are arranging the study. In the larger room two or three other hired waiters are moving around putting things in order and lighting more lamps. From the dining room can be heard the buzz of conversation and laughter. Someone taps a knife against a glass; silence; a toast is proposed; cries of 'Bravo!'; then the buzz of conversation begins again.*

PETTERSEN (*lights a lamp on the mantelpiece above the fireplace, and puts a shade over it*). You hear that, Jensen? Now the old man's at it, proposing a toast to Mrs Soerby.

JENSEN (*moves an armchair forward*). Is it true what they say, that there's something between them?

PETTERSEN. I wouldn't know.

JENSEN. They say he's been a regular old billy-goat in his time.

PETTERSEN. Could be.

JENSEN. Did you say he's giving this party for his son?

PETTERSEN. Yes. He came home yesterday

JENSEN. I never knew old Werle had a son.

PETTERSEN. Oh yes, he's got a son. The boy spends all his time up at the sawmill, though, out at Hoydal. He's never

set foot in town all the years I've worked in this house.  
**A HIRED WAITER** (*in the doorway to the large room*). Pettersen, there's an old fellow here who wants to—

**PETTERSEN** (*beneath his breath*). What the devil? — Oh, not now!

**OLD EKDAL** *enters from the large room, right. He is wearing a threadbare coat with a high collar, and woollen gloves, and carries a stick and a fur hat in his hand and a brown paper parcel under his arm. He has a dirty, reddish-brown wig and small grey moustaches.*

**PETTERSEN** (*goes toward him*). Oh, Jesus! What do you want here?

**EKDAL** (*in the doorway*). Got to get into the office, Pettersen. It's very important.

**PETTERSEN**. The office has been shut for an hour—

**EKDAL**. They told me that downstairs, my boy. But Graaherg's still in there. Be a good lad, Pettersen, and let me nip in this way. (*Points at the concealed door.*) I've been this way before.

**PETTERSEN**. Oh, all right. (*Opens the door.*) But make sure you leave by the proper way. We've got company

**EKDAL**. Yes. I know that — hm! Thanks, Pettersen, my boy. You're a good pal. (*Mutterts quietly.*) Damn fool!

*He goes into the office. PETTERSEN shuts the door after him.*

**JENSEN**. Does he work in the office, too?

**PETTERSEN**. No, he just takes stuff home to copy, when they've more than they can manage. Mind you, he's been quite a gentleman in his time, has old Ekdal.

**JENSEN**. Yes, he looked as if he might have been around a bit.

**PETTERSEN**. Oh, yes. He was a lieutenant.

**JENSEN**. What — him a lieutenant?

**PETTERSEN**. That's right. But then he went into timber or something of that sort. They say he did the dirty on old Werle once. The two of them used to work together at Hoydal. Oh, I know old Ekdal well. We often have a nip and a bottle of beer together down at Madam Eriksen's.

**JENSEN**. But he can't have much to spend, surely?

**PETTERSEN**. I'm the one who does the spending. The way I

look at it is, it's only right to lend a helping hand to gentry who've come down in the world.

JENSEN. What, did he go bankrupt?

PETTERSEN. Worse. He went to prison.

JENSEN. Went to prison!

PETTERSEN. Ssh, they're getting up now.

*The doors to the dining room are thrown open from inside by waiters. MRS SOERBY comes out, engaged by two gentlemen in conversation. A few moments later, the rest of the company follow, HAAKON WERLE among them. Last come HJALMAR EKDAL and GREGERS WERLE.*

MRS SOERBY (*as she goes through*). Pettersen, have the coffee served in the music room.

PETTERSEN. Very good, Mrs Soerby.

*She and the two gentlemen go into the large room and out towards the right. PETTERSEN and JENSEN follow them.*

A PALE, FLABBY GENTLEMAN (*to one with little hair*). Whew — that dinner! Pretty exhausting work, what?

BALDING GENTLEMAN. Ah, it's remarkable what one can get through in three hours, when one puts one's mind to it.

FLABBY GENTLEMAN. Yes, but afterwards, my dear sir! Afterwards!

A THIRD GENTLEMAN. I hear the — er — mocha and maraschino are to be served in the music room.

FLABBY GENTLEMAN. Capital! Then perhaps Mrs Soerby will play something for us.

BALDING GENTLEMAN (*sotto voce*). Let's hope it isn't a marching song.

FLABBY GENTLEMAN. No fear of that. Berta won't give her old friends the shoulder.

*They laugh and pass into the large room.*

WERLE (*quietly, unhappily*). I don't think anyone noticed, Gregers.

GREGERS (*looks at him*). What?

WERLE. Didn't you notice, either?

GREGERS. Notice what?

WERLE. We were thirteen at table.

GREGERS. Thirteen? Oh, really?

WERLE (*glances at HJALMAR EKDAL*). We're usually twelve.  
(*To the others.*) Gentlemen – please!

*He and the rest, except for HJALMAR and GREGERS, go out upstage right.*

HJALMAR (*who has overheard their conversation*). You shouldn't have invited me, Gregers.

GREGERS. What? But this dinner is said to be in my honour.  
So why shouldn't I invite my one and only friend?

HJALMAR. I don't think your father approves. I mean, I never get invited to this house.

GREGERS. No, so I've heard. But I had to see you and speak with you; I'm not staying very long, you know. Yes, we've lost touch with each other since we were at school, Hjalmar. We haven't seen each other for – why, it must be sixteen or seventeen years.

HJALMAR. Is it as long as that?

GREGERS. I'm afraid so. Well, how is everything with you?  
You look well. You've filled out a bit; you're quite stout now.

HJALMAR. Oh – I wouldn't say stout. I dare say I'm a bit broader across the shoulders than I used to be. After all, I'm a man now.

GREGERS. Oh, yes. You're as handsome as ever.

HJALMAR (*sadly*). But within, Gregers! There has been a change there. You must know how disastrously my world has crashed around me – and my family – since we last met.

GREGERS (*more quietly*). How is your father now?

HJALMAR. My dear friend, let us not talk about it. My poor unfortunate father lives with me, of course. He has no one else in the world to lean on. But all this is so distressing for me to talk about. Tell me now, how have things been for you up at the sawmill?

GREGERS. Oh, I've been wonderfully lonely. I've had plenty of time to brood over things. Come, let's make ourselves comfortable.

*He sits in an armchair by the fire and motions HJALMAR into another beside him.*

HJALMAR (*softly*). Thank you all the same, Gregers. I'm grateful to you for inviting me to your father's house. I know now that you no longer have anything against me.

GREGERS (*amazed*). What makes you think I have anything against you?

HJALMAR. You did at first.

GREGERS. At first?

HJALMAR. After the great disaster. Oh, it was only natural that you should. It was only by a hairsbreadth that your father himself escaped being dragged into all this - this dreadful business.

GREGERS. And I should hold that against you? Who gave you this idea?

HJALMAR. I know - I know you did, Gregers. Your father himself told me so.

GREGERS. Father! I see. Hm. Was that why you never wrote me a line?

HJALMAR. Yes.

GREGERS. Not even when you went and became a photographer?

HJALMAR. Your father said there would be no purpose in my writing to you about anything whatever.

GREGERS (*thoughtfully*). No, no; perhaps he was right. But tell me, Hjalmar - are you quite satisfied the way things are now?

HJALMAR (*with a little sigh*). Oh yes, indeed I am. I can't complain. At first, you know, I found it a little strange. It was such a different way of life from what I'd been used to. But everything had changed. The great disaster that ruined my father - the disgrace and the shame, Gregers -

GREGERS (*upset*). Yes, yes, of course, yes.

HJALMAR. Naturally, I had to give up any idea of continuing with my studies. We hadn't a shilling to spare - quite the reverse in fact. Debts. Mostly to your father, I believe -

GREGERS. Hm -

HJALMAR. Well, so I thought it'd be best, you see, to make a clean break. Cut myself off from everything that had to do with my old way of life. In fact, it was your father who

advised me to do it — and as he was being so very helpful to me—

GREGERS. Father?

HJALMAR. Yes, surely you must know? How else could I have found the money to learn photography and equip a studio and set myself up? That costs a lot of money, you know.

GREGERS. And father paid for all this?

HJALMAR. Yes, my dear fellow, didn't you know? I understood him to say he'd written to you.

GREGERS. He never said he was behind it. He must have forgotten. We never write to each other except on business. So it was father—

HJALMAR. Why, yes. He's never wanted people to know about it; but it was he. And of course it was he who made it possible for me to get married. But — perhaps you don't know that either?

GREGERS. I had no idea. (*Shakes him by the arm.*) But my dear Hjalmar, I can't tell you how happy I feel — and guilty. Perhaps I've been unjust to father after all — in some respects. This proves that he has a heart, you see. A kind of conscience—

HJALMAR. Conscience?

GREGERS. Yes, or whatever you like to call it. No, I can't tell you how happy I am to hear this about father. Well, and you're married, Hjalmar! That's more than I shall ever dare to do. Well, I trust you've found happiness in marriage.

HJALMAR. Oh, indeed I have. She's as capable and good a wife as any man could wish for. And she's not by any means uncultured.

GREGERS (*a little surprised*). I'm sure she isn't.

HJALMAR. Yes. Life is a great teacher. Being with me every day — and we have a couple of very gifted friends who visit us daily. I can assure you, you wouldn't recognize Gina.

GREGERS. Gina?

HJALMAR. Yes, my dear fellow, don't you remember? Her name's Gina.

GREGERS. Whose name is Gina? I have no idea what you're—

HJALMAR. But don't you remember? She used to work here once.

GREGERS (*looks at him*). You mean Gina Hansen?

HJALMAR. Of course I mean Gina Hansen.

GREGERS. Who kept house for us when my mother was ill?  
The year before she died?

HJALMAR. Yes, that's right. But my dear fellow, I'm absolutely certain your father wrote and told you I'd got married.

GREGERS (*has got up*). Yes, he told me that. But what he didn't tell me was that — (*Begins to pace up and down*.) Ah, but wait a minute. Perhaps he did after all, now I think about it. But father always writes such brief letters. (*Half sits on the arm of his chair*.) Look, tell me now, Hjalmar — this is very funny — how did you come to meet Gina — I mean, your wife?

HJALMAR. Oh, it was quite straightforward. As you know, Gina didn't stay long with your father — everything was so upside down at the time — your mother's illness — it was all too much for Gina, so she gave notice and left. It was the year before your mother died. Or was it the same year?

GREGERS. The same year. And I was up at the sawmill. But then what happened?

HJALMAR. Yes, well then Gina went home to live with her mother, a Mrs Hansen, a very excellent hard-working woman who ran a little café. Well, she had a room to let; a very nice, comfortable room.

GREGERS. And you were lucky enough to find out about it?

HJALMAR. Yes — in fact, it was your father who suggested it. And it was there, you see, that I really got to know Gina.

GREGERS. And the engagement followed?

HJALMAR. Yes. Well, you know how quickly young people become fond of each other — hm —

GREGERS (*gets up and walks up and down for a little*). Tell me — when you were engaged — was that when father got you to — I mean, was that when you began to take up photography?

HJALMAR. Yes, that's right. I was very keen to get married as

soon as possible. And your father and I both came to the conclusion that photography would be the most convenient profession for me to take up. And Gina thought so too. Oh, and there was another thing. By a lucky chance, Gina had learned how to retouch photographs.

GREGERS. What a fortunate coincidence.

HJALMAR (*pleased, gets up*). Yes, wasn't it? Amazingly lucky, don't you think?

GREGERS. I certainly do. Father seems almost to have been a kind of fairy godfather to you.

HJALMAR (*emotionally*). He did not forget his old friend's son in his time of need. He's got a heart, you see, Gregers.

MRS SOERBY (*enters with HAAKON WERLE on her arm*). Not another word, now, Mr Werle. You mustn't walk around any longer in there with all those bright lights. It's not good for you.

WERLE (*lets go of her arm and passes his hand over his eyes*). Yes, I think you may be right.

PETERSEN and JENSEN enter with trays.

MRS SOERBY (*to the guests in the other room*). Gentlemen, please! If anyone wants a glass of punch, he must come in here.

FLABBY GENTLEMAN (*comes over to MRS SOERBY*). Damn it, madam, is it true that you have deprived us of our sacred privilege, the cigar?

MRS SOERBY. Yes. This is Mr Werle's sanctum, sir, and here there is no smoking.

BALDING GENTLEMAN. When did you introduce this austere edict, Miss Soerby?

MRS SOERBY. After our last dinner, sir; when certain persons permitted themselves to overstep the mark.

BALDING GENTLEMAN. And it is not permitted to overstep the mark a little, Madame Berta? Not even an inch or two?

MRS SOERBY. No. Not in any direction, my dear Chamberlain.

*Most of the GUESTS have come into the study. The servants hand round the glasses of punch.*

HAAKON WERLE (*to HJALMAR, who is standing apart, by a table*). What's that you're looking at, Ekdal?

HJALMAR. It's only an album, sir.

**BALDING GENTLEMAN** (*who is wandering around*). Ah, photographs! Yes, that's rather down your street, isn't it!

**FLABBY GENTLEMAN** (*in an armchair*). Haven't you brought any of your own with you?

**HJALMAR.** No, I haven't.

**FLABBY GENTLEMAN.** You should have. It's good for the digestion to sit and look at pictures.

**BALDING GENTLEMAN.** Adds to the fun. We've each got to contribute our mite, haven't we?

**A SHORT-SIGHTED GENTLEMAN.** All contributions will be gratefully received.

**MRS SOERBY.** I think the gentlemen mean that if one is invited out one should work for one's dinner, Mr Ekdal.

**FLABBY GENTLEMAN.** Where the table is so exquisite, that duty becomes a pleasure.

**BALDING GENTLEMAN.** Yes, by God! Particularly when it's a question of fighting for survival—

**MRS SOERBY.** Touché!

*They continue amid joking and laughter.*

**GREGERS** (*quietly*). You must join in, Hjalmar.

**HJALMAR** (*twists uncomfortably*). What should I talk about?

**FLABBY GENTLEMAN.** Wouldn't you agree, Mr Werle, that Tokay may be regarded as a comparatively safe drink for the stomach?

**WERLE** (*by the fireplace*). I'd guarantee the Tokay you drank tonight, anyway. It's an exceptional year, quite exceptional. But of course you would have noticed that.

**FLABBY GENTLEMAN.** Yes, it had a remarkably *soignée* bouquet.

**HJALMAR** (*uncertainly*). Is there some difference between the various years?

**FLABBY GENTLEMAN** (*laughs*). I say, that's good!

**WERLE** (*smiles*). It's a waste to offer you good wine.

**BALDING GENTLEMAN.** Tokay's like photography, Mr Ekdal. It needs sunshine. Isn't that right?

**HJALMAR.** Oh yes, light is important, of course.

**MRS SOERBY.** But that's like you, gentlemen. You're drawn towards the sun, too.

BALDING GENTLEMAN. For shame! That's not worthy of you.

SHORT-SIGHTED GENTLEMAN. Mrs Soerby is displaying her wit.

FLABBY GENTLEMAN. At our expense. (*Threateningly.*) Oh, madame, madame!

MRS SOERBY. But it's perfectly true. Vintages do differ greatly. The oldest are the best.

SHORT-SIGHTED GENTLEMAN. Do you count me among the old ones?

MRS SOERBY. By no means.

BALDING GENTLEMAN. Indeed? And what about me, dear Mrs Soerby?

FLABBY GENTLEMAN. Yes, and me? What vintage are we?

MRS SOERBY. A sweet vintage, gentlemen!

*She sips a glass of punch. The GENTLEMEN laugh and flirt with her.*

WERLE. Mrs Soerby always finds a way out – when she wants to. Fill your glasses, gentlemen! Pettersen, look after them. Gregers, let us take a glass together.

GREGERS *does not move.*

Won't you join us, Ekdal? I didn't get a chance to drink with you at dinner.

GRAABERG, *the book-keeper, looks in through the concealed door.*

GRAABERG (*to HAAKON WERLE*). Excuse me, sir, but I can't get out.

WERLE. What, have you got locked in again?

GRAABERG. Yes. Flakstad's gone off with the keys.

WERLE. Well, you'd better come through here, then.

GRAABERG. But there's someone else—

WERLE. Well, let him come, too. Don't be frightened.

GRAABERG and OLD EKDAL *come out of the office.*

WERLE (*involuntarily*). Oh God!

*The laughter and chatter of the GUESTS dies away. HJALMAR shrinks at the sight of his father, puts down his glass and turns away towards the fireplace.*

EKDAL (*does not look up, but makes little bows to either side as he*

*walks, mumbling).* Beg pardon. Come the wrong way. Door locked. Beg pardon.

*He and GRAABERG go out upstage right.*

WERLE (*between his teeth*). Damn that Graaberg!

GREGERS (*stares open-mouthed at HJALMAR*). Surely that wasn't—?

FLABBY GENTLEMAN. What's all this? Who was that?

GREGERS. Oh, no one. Just the book-keeper and someone else.

SHORT-SIGHTED GENTLEMAN (*to HJALMAR*). Did you know that man?

HJALMAR. I don't know — I didn't notice—

FLABBY GENTLEMAN (*gets up*). What the devil's going on?

*He goes over to some of the others, who are talking quietly amongst themselves.*

MRS SOERBY (*whispers to PFTTERSFN*). Take something out to him. Something really nice.

PFTTERSFN (*nods*). Very good, ma'am.

*He goes out.*

GREGERS (*quietly, emotionally, to HJALMAR*). Then it *was* he!

HJALMAR. Yes

GREGERS. And you stood aside and denied him!

HJALMAR (*whispers violently*). What could I do?

GREGERS. You denied your own father?

HJALMAR (*in pain*). Oh — if you were in my place, you'd—

*The talk among the GUESTS, which has been carried on in a low tone, now switches over to a forced loudness.*

BALDING GENTLEMAN (*goes amiably over to HJALMAR and GREGERS*). Hullo, reviving old college memories, what? Don't you smoke, Mr Ekdal? Want a light? Oh, I'd forgotten — we mustn't—

HJALMAR. Thank you, I won't.

FLABBY GENTLEMAN. Haven't you some nice little poem you could recite to us, Mr Ekdal? You used to recite so beautifully.

HJALMAR. I'm afraid I can't remember one.

FLABBY GENTLEMAN. Pity. What else can we find to amuse ourselves with, Balle?

*The TWO GENTLEMEN walk into the next room.*

HJALMAR (*unhappily*). Gregers, I want to go. You know, when a man has been as buffeted and tossed by the winds of fate as I have — Say goodbye to your father for me.

GREGERS. I will. Are you going straight home?

HJALMAR. Yes. Why?

GREGERS. In that case I may drop in on you later.

HJALMAR. No, don't do that. You mustn't come to my home. It's a miserable place, Gregers; especially after a brilliant gathering like this. We can always meet somewhere in town.

MRS SOERBY (*has come over to them, and says quietly*). Are you leaving, Ekdal?

HJALMAR. Yes.

MRS SOERBY. Give my regards to Gina.

HJALMAR. Thank you.

MRS SOERBY. Tell her I'm coming out to see her one of these days.

HJALMAR. I will. Thank you. (*To GREGERS.*) Stay here I don't want anyone to see me go.

*He saunters into the other room and out to the right.*

MRS SOERBY (*to PETERSEN, who has returned*). Well, did you give the old man something?

PETERSEN. Yes, I put a bottle of brandy into his pocket.

MRS SOERBY. Oh, you might have found something nicer than that.

PETERSEN. Why, no, Mrs Soerby. Brandy's what he likes best.

FLABBY GENTLEMAN (*in the doorway, with a sheet of music in his hand*). Shall we play a duet together, Mrs Soerby?

MRS SOERBY. Yes, with pleasure.

GUESTS. Bravo, bravo!

*She and all the GUESTS go out to the right. GREGERS remains standing by the fireplace. HAAKON WERLE starts looking for something on his desk, and seems to wish that GREGERS would go. Seeing that GREGERS does not move, he goes towards the door.*

GREGERS. Father, would you mind waiting a moment?

WERLE (*stops*). What is it?

GREGERS. I've got to speak with you.

WERLE. Can't it wait till we're alone together?

GREGERS. No, it can't. We may never be alone together.

WERLE (*comes closer*). What does that mean?

*During the following scene, piano music can be heard distantly from the music room.*

GREGERS. How has that family been allowed to sink into this pitiable condition?

WERLE. You mean the Ekdals, I presume?

GREGERS. Yes, I mean the Ekdals. Lieutenant Ekdal and you used to be such close friends.

WERLE. Unfortunately, yes. Too close. All these years I've had to pay for it. It's him I have to thank for the stain I have suffered on my name and reputation.

GREGERS (*quietly*). Was he really the only one who was guilty?

WERLE. Who else?

GREGERS. You and he bought those forests together.

WERLE. But it was Ekdal who drew up that misleading map. It was he who had all that timber felled illegally on government property. He was in charge of everything up there. I was absolutely in the dark as to what Lieutenant Ekdal was doing.

GREGERS. Lieutenant Ekdal seems to have been pretty much in the dark himself.

WERLE. Quite possibly. But the fact remains that he was found guilty and I was acquitted.

GREGERS. Oh, yes, I know nothing was proved against you.

WERLE. An acquittal means not guilty. Why do you rake up these old troubles, which turned me grey before my time? Is that what you've been brooding about all these years up there? I can assure you, Gregers, in this town the whole business has been forgotten long ago, as far as my reputation is concerned.

GREGERS. But what about those wretched Ekdals?

WERLE. What would you have had me do for them? When Ekdal was released he was a broken man, past help. Upon

my honour, Gregers, I did everything I could short of exposing myself to gossip and suspicion—

GREGERS. Suspicion? Oh, I see.

WERLE. I've arranged for Ekdal to do copying for the office, and I pay him a great deal more than the work's worth—

GREGERS (*without looking at him*). I don't doubt it.

WERLE. You laugh? You don't think it's true? Oh, you won't find anything about it in the books. I don't keep account of that kind of payment.

GREGERS (*smiles coldly*). No, there are certain payments of which it's best to keep no account.

WERLE. What do you mean by that?

GREGERS (*screwing up his courage*). Have you any account of what it cost you to have Hjalmar Ekdal taught photography?

WERLE. Why should I have any account of that?

GREGERS. I know now that it was you who paid for it. And I also know that it was you who so generously enabled him to set himself up.

WERLE. And still you say I've done nothing for the Ekdals? I can assure you, that family's cost me a pretty penny.

GREGERS. Have you accounted any of those pennies in your books?

WERLE. Why do you ask that?

GREGERS. Oh, I have my reasons. Tell me — when you began to take such a warm interest in your old friend's son — wasn't that just about the time he was about to get married?

WERLE. Yes, how the devil — how do you expect me to remember after all these years — ?

GREGERS. You wrote me a letter at the time — a business letter, of course — and in a postscript you said — quite briefly — that Hjalmar Ekdal had married a Miss Hansen.

WERLE. Yes, so he did. That was her name.

GREGERS. But what you didn't say was that Miss Hansen was Gina Hansen — our former maid.

WERLE (*laughs scornfully, but with an effort*). No. It didn't occur to me that you were particularly interested in our former maid.

GREGERS. I wasn't. But — (*Lowers his voice.*) — there was someone else in this house who was interested in her.

WERLE. What do you mean? (*Angrily.*) You're not referring to me?

GREGERS (*quietly but firmly*). Yes, I am referring to you.

WERLE. You dare to — you have the impertinence! That ungrateful — that photographer — how dare he make such insinuations!

GREGERS. Hjalmar has never said a word about this. I don't think he suspects anything.

WERLE. Where did you get it from, then? Who has said such a thing to you?

GREGERS. My unhappy mother told me. The last time I saw her.

WERLE. Your mother! I might have known it. She and you always clung together. She turned you against me from the first.

GREGERS. No. It was all the suffering and humiliation she had to endure before she finally succumbed and came to such a pitiful end.

WERLE. Oh, she didn't have to suffer. Not more than most people, anyway. But one can't do anything with people who are over-sensitive and romantic. I've learned that much. And you nurse these suspicions and go round rooting up all kinds of old rumours and slanders about your own father! At your age, Gregers, it's time you found something more useful to do.

GREGERS. Yes, it's about time.

WERLE. It might enable you to be a little more at peace with yourself than you seem to be now. What good can it do for you to stay up at the sawmill, year after year, drudging away like a common clerk and refusing to accept a penny more than the standard wage? It's absolutely idiotic.

GREGERS. I wish I was sure of that.

WERLE. I understand how you feel. You want to be independent, you don't want to be in my debt. But now there is an opportunity for you to become independent, and be your own master in everything.

GREGERS. Oh? How?

WERLE. When I wrote and told you it was necessary for you to travel here at once - hm—

GREGERS. Yes, what do you want me for? I've been waiting all day to find out.

WERLE. I want to suggest that you become a partner in the firm.

GREGERS. I? Your partner?

WERLE. Yes. It wouldn't mean we'd have to be together all the time. You could take over the business here, and I'd move up to the mill.

GREGERS. You?

WERLE. Yes. You see, I'm not able to work as hard as I used to. I've got to take care of my eyes, Gregers. They've begun to grow a little weak.

GREGERS. They always were.

WERLE. Not like now. Besides — circumstances might make it desirable for me to live up there. For a while, anyway.

GREGERS. I hadn't imagined anything like this.

WERLE. Listen, Gregers. I know there are so many things that stand between us. But we're father and son. It seems to me we must be able to come to an understanding.

GREGERS. You mean, we must appear to come to an understanding?

WERLE. Well, that is something. Think it over, Gregers. Don't you think it might be possible? Well?

GREGERS (*looks at him coldly*). What's behind all this?

WERLE. How do you mean?

GREGERS. You want to use me, don't you?

WERLE. In a relationship as close as ours, one can always be useful to the other.

GREGERS. That's what they say.

WERLE. I should like to have you living at home with me for a while. I'm a lonely man, Gregers. I've always felt lonely, all my life, but especially now that I'm growing old. I need to have someone near me—

GREGERS. You've got Mrs Soerby.

WERLE. Yes, I have her. And she's become — well, almost

indispensable to me. She's witty and good-humoured; she brightens the house for me. I need that - badly.

GREGERS. Well, then you have things the way you want them.

WERLE. Yes, but I'm afraid it can't continue like this. A woman in her situation may easily find herself compromised in the eyes of the world. Yes; and I dare say it's not very good for a man's reputation, either.

GREGERS. Oh, when a man gives dinners like this; he needn't worry about what people think.

WERLE. Yes, but what about her, Gregers? I'm afraid she won't want to put up with this for much longer. And even if she did - even if, for my sake, she were to set herself above the gossip and the slander - Don't you think then, Gregers - you with your stern sense of right and wrong - that - ?

GREGERS (*interrupts*). Answer me one thing. Are you thinking of marrying her?

WERLE. Suppose I were? Would you be so insuperably opposed to that?

GREGERS. Not in the least.

WERLE. I didn't know if perhaps - out of respect to your late mother's memory -

GREGERS. I'm not a romantic.

WERLE. Well, whatever you are, you've taken a great weight from my mind. I'm delighted that I may count on your agreement to the action I propose to take.

GREGERS (*looks at him*). Now I see what you want to use me for.

WERLE. Use you? What kind of talk is that?

GREGERS. Oh, let's not be squeamish. Not when we're alone together. (*Gives a short laugh.*) I see. So that's why, at all costs, I had to come along and show myself here. So as to have a nice family reunion in Mrs Soerby's honour. Father and son - *tableau*! That's something new, isn't it?

WERLE. How dare you take that tone?

GREGERS. When has there been any family life here? Not for as long as I can remember. But now of course there's got to be a little. It'll look splendid if people can say that the son of the family has flown home on the wings of filial piety to

attend his ageing father's wedding feast. What'll become then of all those dreadful rumours about the wrongs his poor dead mother had to put up with? They will vanish. Her son will dissipate them into thin air.

WERLE. Gregers — I believe there's no one in the world you hate as much as you do me.

GREGERS (*quietly*). I've seen you at close quarters.

WERLE. You have seen me with your mother's eyes. (*Lowers his voice a little.*) But you should remember that her vision was sometimes a little — blurred.

GREGERS (*trembling*). I know what you're trying to say. But who was to blame for that? You were! You and all those — ! And the last of them you palmed off on to Hjalmar Ekdal, when you no longer — oh!

WERLE (*shrugs his shoulders*). Word for word as though I were listening to your mother.

GREGERS (*not heeding him*). And there he sits, childlike and trusting, caught in this web of deceit — sharing his roof with a woman like that, never suspecting that what he calls his home is built upon a lie! (*Comes a step closer.*) When I look back on your career, I see a battlefield strewn with shattered lives.

WERLE. It seems the gulf between us is too wide.

GREGERS (*bows coldly*). I agree. Therefore I take my hat and go.

WERLE. Go? Leave the house?

GREGERS. Yes. Because now at last I see my vocation.

WERLE. And what is that vocation?

GREGERS. You'd only laugh if I told you.

WERLE. A lonely man does not laugh easily, Gregers.

GREGERS (*points upstage*). Look, father. The gentlemen are playing blind man's buff with Mrs Soerby. Goodnight, and goodbye.

*He goes out upstage right. Sounds of laughter and merriment are heard from the GUESTS, as they come into sight in the other room.*

WERLE (*mutters scornfully after GREGERS*). Hm! Poor wretch! And he says he's not a romantic!

## Act Two

HJALMAR EKDAL's studio. It is quite a large room, and is evidently an attic. To the right is a sloping ceiling containing large panes of glass, which are half-covered by a blue curtain. In the corner upstage right is the front door. Downstage of this a door to the living room. In the left-hand wall are two more doors, with an iron stove between them. In the rear wall are broad double sliding doors. The studio is humbly but comfortably furnished. Between the doors on the right, a little away from the wall, stands a sofa, with a table and some chairs. On the table is a lighted lamp, with a shade. In the corner by the stove is an old armchair. Here and there, various pieces of photographic apparatus are set up. Against the rear wall, to the left of the sliding doors, is a bookcase, containing some books, boxes, bottles containing chemicals, various tools, instruments and other objects. Photographs and small articles such as brushes, sheets of paper and so forth, lie on the table.

GINA EKDAL is seated on a chair at the table, sewing. HEDVIG is seated on the sofa with her hands shading her eyes and her thumbs in her ears, reading a book.

GINA (*glances at her a couple of times, as though with secret anxiety*). Hedvig!

HEDVIG does not hear. GINA repeats more loudly.

Hedvig!

HEDVIG (*drops her hands and looks up*). Yes, mother?

GINA. Hedvig darling, don't read any more.

HEDVIG. Oh, but mother, can't I go on a little longer? Just a little?

GINA. No, no; put the book away. Your father doesn't like it. He never reads in the evenings.

HEDVIG (*closes the book*). No, father doesn't bother much about reading, does he?

GINA (*puts down her sewing and picks up a pencil and a small notebook from the table*). Can you remember how much we paid for that butter?

HEDVIG. One and sixpence.

GINA. That's right. (*Makes a note of it*.) It's shocking how much butter gets eaten in this house. Then there was the sausages, and the cheese — let me see — (*Writes*.) And the ham — hm — (*Adds it up*.) Mm, that makes nearly —

HEDVIG. Don't forget the beer.

GINA. Oh yes, of course. (*Writes*.) It mounts up. But we've got to have it.

HEDVIG. But you and I didn't have to have a proper meal this evening, as father was out.

GINA. Yes; that helped. Oh, and I got eight and six for those photographs.

HEDVIG. I say! As much as that?

GINA. Eight and six!

*Silence. GINA takes up her sewing again. HEDVIG picks up a pencil and paper and starts to draw, her left hand shading her eyes.*

HEDVIG. Isn't it lovely to think of father being invited by Mr Werle to that big dinner?

GINA. He wasn't invited by Mr Werle. It was his son who sent the invitation. (*Short pause*.) You know we've nothing to do with Mr Werle.

HEDVIG. I'm so looking forward to father coming home. He promised he'd ask Mrs Soerby for something nice to bring me.

GINA. Yes, there's never any shortage of nice things in that house.

HEDVIG (*still drawing*). I think I'm beginning to get a bit hungry.

*OLD EKDAL, his package of papers under his arm and another parcel in his coat pocket, comes in through the front door.*

GINA. Hullo, grandfather, you're very late tonight.

EKDAL. They'd shut the office. Graaberg kept me waiting. I had to go through the — hm.

HEDVIG. Did they give you anything new to copy, grandfather?

EKDAL. All this. Lock!

GINA. Well, that's good.

HEDVIG. And you've another parcel in your pocket.

EKDAL. Have I? Oh, nonsense — that's nothing.

*Puts down his stick in a corner.*

This'll keep me busy for a long time, this will, Gina.

*Slides one of the doors in the rear wall a little to one side.*

Ssh!

*Looks inside for a moment, then closes the door again carefully.*

He, he! They're all asleep. And she's lain down in her basket. He, he!

HEDVIG. Are you sure she won't be cold in that basket, grandfather?

EKDAL. What an idea! Cold? With all that straw? (*Goes towards the door upstage left.*) Are there any matches?

GINA. They're on the chest of drawers.

*EKDAL goes into his room.*

HEDVIG. Isn't it splendid grandfather getting all that stuff to copy again, after so long?

GINA. Yes, poor old father. It'll mean a bit of pocket money for him.

HEDVIG. And he won't be able to spend all morning down at that horrid Mis Eriksen's restaurant, will he?

GINA. Yes, there's that too.

*Short silence.*

HEDVIG. Do you think they're still sitting at table?

GINA. God knows. It wouldn't surprise me.

HEDVIG. Think of all that lovely food father's getting to eat!

I'm sure he'll be in a good humour when he comes back.  
Don't you think, mother?

GINA. Oh, yes. But if only we were able to tell him we'd managed to let that room.

HEDVIG. But we don't have to worry about *that* tonight.

GINA. It wouldn't do any harm. It's no use to us standing empty.

HEDVIG. No, I mean we don't have to worry about it because tonight father'll be jolly anyway. It'll be better if we can save the news about the room for another time.

GINA (*glances across at her*). Does it make you happy to have good news to tell father when he comes home in the evening?

HEDVIG. Yes, it makes things more cheerful here.

GINA. Yes, there's something in that.

OLD EKDAL *comes in again and goes towards the door downstage left.*

GINA (*half turns in her chair*). Do you want something out of the kitchen, grandfather?

EKDAL. Er - yes, yes. Don't get up.

*He goes out.*

GINA. He's not messing about with the fire, is he? (*Waits a moment.*) Hedvig, go and see what he's up to.

EKDAL *returns with a little jug of steaming water.*

HEDVIG. Are you getting some hot water, grandfather?

EKDAL. Yes, I am. Need it for something. Got some writing to do; and the ink's like porridge - hm!

GINA. But grandfather, you should eat your supper first. I've put it in there for you.

EKDAL. Can't be bothered with supper, Gina. I'm busy, I tell you. I don't want anyone to disturb me. Not anyone - hm!

*He goes into his room. GINA and HEDVIG look at each other.*

GINA (*quietly*). Where do you think he's got the money from?

HEDVIG. From Graaberg, I suppose.

GINA. No, he can't have. Graaberg always sends the money to me.

HEDVIG. He must have got a bottle on tick somewhere, then.

GINA. Poor grandfather! No one'll give him anything on credit.

HJALMAR EKDAL, *wearing an overcoat and a grey felt hat, enters right.*

GINA (*drops her sewing and gets up*). Why, Hjalmar, are you here already?

HEDVIG (*simultaneously, jumping to her feet*). Oh, father, fancy your coming back so soon!

HJALMAR (*takes off his hat*). Yes, well, most of them had begun to leave.

HEDVIG. As early as this?

HJALMAR. Yes. It was a dinner party, you know. (*Begins to take off his overcoat*.)

GINA. Let me help you.

HEDVIG. Me too.

*They take off his coat. GINA hangs it up on the rear wall.*

Were there many people there, father?

HJALMAR. Oh no, not many. We were, oh, twelve or fourteen at table.

GINA. And you talked to them all?

HJALMAR. Oh yes, a little. But Gregers monopolized me most of the time.

GINA. Is he still as ugly as ever?

HJALMAR. Well, he's not very much to look at. Hasn't the old man come home?

HEDVIG. Yes, grandfather's in his room, writing.

HJALMAR. Did he say anything?

GINA. No, what should he say?

HJALMAR. Didn't he mention anything about—? I thought I heard someone say he'd been up to see Graaberg. I'll go in and have a word with him.

GINA. No, no — don't.

HJALMAR. Why not? Did he say he didn't want to see me?

GINA. I don't think he wants to see anyone this evening.

*HEDVIG makes signs to HJALMAR. GINA does not notice.*

He's been out and fetched some hot water.

HJALMAR. Oh. He's—?

GINA. Yes.

HJALMAR. Dear God! Poor old father! Bless his white hairs! Let him have his little pleasure.

*OLD EKDAL, wearing a dressing-gown and smoking a pipe, enters from his room.*

EKDAL. So you're home? I thought I heard your voice.

HJALMAR. Yes, I've just got back.

EKDAL. You didn't see me, did you?

HJALMAR. No. But they said you'd been through, and so I thought I'd follow you.

EKDAL. Hm. Decent of you, Hjalmar. Who were all those people?

HJALMAR. Oh, all sorts. There was Mr Flor - the Chamberlain - and Mr Balle - he's one, too - and so's Mr Kaspersen - and Mr - what's his name, I don't remember what they were all called -

EKDAL (*nods*). You hear that, Gina? People from the palace - and Hjalmar!

GINA. Yes, they're very grand up there nowadays.

HEDVIG. Did the Chamberlains sing, father? Or recite anything?

HJALMAR. No, they just chattered. They tried to get me to recite something. But I said, 'No.'

EKDAL. You said 'No', did you?

GINA. Oh, you might have obliged them.

HJALMAR. No. One can't go round pandering to everyone. (*Begins to walk up and down the room.*) I won't, anyway.

EKDAL. No, no. You won't get round Hjalmar as easily as that.

HJALMAR. I don't see why *I* should have to provide the entertainment on the few occasions when I go out to enjoy myself. Let the others do some work for a change. Those fellows go from one dinner table to the next stuffing themselves every night. Let them work for their food and drink.

GINA. You didn't say all this?

HJALMAR (*humis to himself*). I gave them a piece of my mind.

EKDAL. You said this to their faces?

HJALMAR. Could be. (*Nonchalantly.*) Afterwards we had a little altercation about Tokay.

EKDAL. Tokay, did you say? That's a fine wine.

HJALMAR (*stops walking*). It *can* be a fine wine. But, let me tell you, all vintages are not equally fine. It depends on how much sunshine the grapes have had.

GINA. Oh, Hjalmar! You know about everything!

EKDAL. And they tried to argue about that?

HJALMAR. They tried. But they soon learned that it's the same

as with Chamberlains. All vintages are not equally fine.  
GINA. The things you think of!

EKDAL (*chuckles*). He he! And they had to put that in their pipes and smoke it?

HJALMAR. Yes. It was said straight to their faces.

EKDAL. You hear that, Gina? He said it straight to the Chamberlains' faces.

GINA. Just fancy! Straight to their faces!

HJALMAR. Yes, but I don't want it talked about. One doesn't repeat such things. It was all very friendly, of course.

They're decent friendly people. Why should I hurt them?

EKDAL. But straight to their faces!

HEDVIG (*trying to please him*). What fun it is to see you in tails!

You look splendid in tails, father!

HJALMAR. Yes, I do, don't I? And it fits me perfectly; almost as though it had been made for me. Just a little tight under the arms, perhaps. Give me a hand, Hedvig. (*Takes them off*.)

I think I'll put my jacket on. Where's my jacket, Gina?

GINA. Here it is.

*She brings the jacket and helps him on with it.*

HJALMAR. That's better! Don't forget to let Molvik have the tails back tomorrow morning.

GINA (*puts them away*). I'll see he gets them.

HJALMAR (*stretches*). Ah, now I feel more at home. Loose-fitting clothes suit my figure better. Don't you think, Hedvig?

HEDVIG. Yes, father.

HJALMAR. When I loosen my tie so that the ends flow like this - Look! What do you think of that?

HEDVIG. Oh, yes, that looks very good with your moustache and those big curls of yours.

HJALMAR. I wouldn't call them curls. Waves.

HEDVIG. Yes, they're such big curls.

HJALMAR. They are waves.

HEDVIG (*after a moment, tugs his jacket*). Father!

HJALMAR. Well, what is it?

HEDVIG. Oh, you know quite well what it is.

HJALMAR. No, I don't. Really.

HEDVIG (*laughs and whimpers*). Oh, yes, you do, father. You mustn't tease me!

HJALMAR. But what is it?

HEDVIG. Oh, stop it! Give it to me, father! You know! All those nice things you promised me!

HJALMAR. Oh, dear! Fancy my forgetting that!

HEDVIG. Oh, no, you're only teasing, father! Oh, it's beastly of you! Where have you hidden it?

HJALMAR. No, honestly, I forgot. But wait a moment! I've something else for you, Hedvig.

*He goes over to the tails and searches in the pockets.*

HEDVIG (*jumps up and claps her hands*). Oh, mother, mother!

GINA. There, you see. Just be patient, and—

HJALMAR (*holds out a card*). Look, here it is.

HEDVIG. That? That's only a piece of paper.

HJALMAR. It's the menu, Hedvig. The whole menu. Look here. It says *Déjeuner*. That means menu.

HEDVIG. Is that all?

HJALMAR. Well, I forgot the other things. But believe me, Hedvig, they're not much fun really, all those sickly sweet things. Sit over there at the table and read this menu, and then I'll describe to you how each dish tasted. Here you are, now, Hedvig.

HEDVIG (*swallows her tears*). Thank you.

*She sits down but does not read. GINA makes a sign to her.*

HJALMAR notices.

HJALMAR (*starts walking up and down*). Really, it's incredible the things a breadwinner's expected to remember. If one forgets the slightest little thing, there are sour faces all round one. Well, one gets used to it. (*Stops by the stove, where OLD EKDAL is sitting.*) Have you looked in there this evening, father?

EKDAL. Yes, of course I have. She's gone into the basket.

HJALMAR. Gone into the basket, has she? She's beginning to get used to it, then.

EKDAL. What did I tell you? Well, now, you see, there are one or two little—

HJALMAR. Little improvements, yes.

EKDAL. We've got to have them, Hjalmar.

HJALMAR. Yes. Let's have a word about these improvements, father. Come along, let's sit on the sofa.

EKDAL. Yes, let's. Er—I think I'll fill my pipe first. Oh, I'd better clean it too. Hm.

*He goes into his room.*

GINA. (*smiles at HJALMAR*). Clean his pipe!

HJALMAR. Oh, Gina, let him. Poor, shipwrecked old man! Yes, those improvements—I'd better get them done to-morrow.

GINA. But you won't have time tomorrow, Hjalmar.

HEDVIG (*interrupts*). Oh, yes he will, mother!

GINA. Don't forget those prints have to be re-touched. They've sent for them so many times.

HJALMAR. Oh, are you on about those prints again? They'll be ready. Have there been any new orders at all?

GINA. No, I'm afraid not. I've nothing tomorrow but those two portraits I told you about.

HJALMAR. Is that all? Well, if one doesn't put one's mind to it—

GINA. But what can I do? I advertise as much as I can—

HJALMAR. Advertise, advertise! You see what good that does. I don't suppose anyone's come to look at the room either?

GINA. No, not yet.

HJALMAR. I might have known it. If one doesn't bother to keep one's eyes and ears open—One must try to make an effort, Gina.

HEDVIG (*goes towards him*). Can I bring your flute, father?

HJALMAR. No. No flute. I don't need the pleasures of this world. (*Starts walking again.*) Yes, I'm going to work tomorrow. Don't you worry about that. I'll work as long as there's strength in these arms—

GINA. But my dear Hjalmar, I didn't mean it like that.

HEDVIG. Father, would you like a bottle of beer?

HJALMAR. Certainly not. I want nothing of anyone. (*Stops.*) Beer? Did you say beer?

HEDVIG (*alive*). Yes, father. Lovely, cool beer.

HJALMAR. Well – if you want to, bring in a bottle.

GINA. Yes, do. That's a nice idea.

HEDVIG runs towards the kitchen door.

HJALMAR (*by the stove, stops her, looks at her, takes her head in his hands and presses her to him*). Hedvig! Hedvig!

HEDVIG (*happy, crying*). Oh, dear, kind father!

HJALMAR. No, don't call me that. I have been eating at the rich man's table. Gorging my belly at the groaning board.

And yet I could—

GINA (*sitting at the table*). Oh, nonsense, nonsense, Hjalmar.

HJALMAR. It's true. But you mustn't judge me too harshly.

You know I love you both. In spite of everything—

HEDVIG (*throws her arms round him*). And we love you very, very much, father.

HJALMAR. And if I should, once in a while, be unreasonable – dear God! – remember that I am a man besieged by a host of sorrows. Oh, well. (*Dries her eyes*.) This is not the moment for beer. Give me my flute.

HEDVIG runs to the bookcase and fetches it.

HJALMAR. Thank you. Ah, this is better. With my flute in my hand, and you two by my side – ah!

HEDVIG sits at the table by GINA. HJALMAR walks up and down, then begins to play a Bohemian folk dance, with spirit, in a slow and mournful tempo, and sensitively.

HJALMAR (*stops playing, stretches out his left hand to GINA and says emotionally*). Life may be poor and humble under our roof. But it is home. And I tell you, Gina – it is good to be here.

*He begins to play again. After a few moments, there is a knock on the front door.*

GINA (*gets up*). Hush, Hjalmar. I think there's someone at the door.

HJALMAR (*puts the flute away in the bookcase*). Oh, here we go again.

GREGERS WERLE (*outside on the landing*). Excuse me, but—

GINA (*starts back slightly*). Oh!

GREGERS. Doesn't Mr Ekdal live here? The photographer.

GINA. Yes, he does.

HJALMAR (*goes over to the door*). Gregers! Are you here? Well, you'd better come in.

GREGERS (*enters*). But I told you I'd visit you.

HJALMAR. But — tonight? Have you left the party?

GREGERS. Yes. I have left the party. And my home, too. Good evening, Mrs Ekdal. I don't suppose you recognize me?

GINA. Why, yes, Mr Gregers. I recognize you.

GREGERS. Yes. I'm like my mother. And I've no doubt you remember her.

HJALMAR. Did you say you had left your father's house?

GREGERS. Yes. I've moved to a hotel.

HJALMAR. Oh, I see. Well, since you've come, take off your coat and sit down.

GREGERS. Thank you.

*He takes off his coat. He has changed into a simple grey suit of a provincial cut.*

HJALMAR. Here, on the sofa. Make yourself comfortable.

*GREGERS sits on the sofa, HJALMAR on a chair by the table.*

GREGERS (*looks round*). So this is it, Hjalmar. This is where you live.

HJALMAR. This room is my studio, as you see.

GINA. We usually sit here, because there's more space.

HJALMAR. We had a nicer place before, but this apartment has one great advantage. The bedrooms—

GINA. And we've a spare room, on the other side of the passage that we can let.

GREGERS (*to HJALMAR*). Oh, I see. You take lodgers as well?

HJALMAR. No, not yet. It takes time, you know. One's got to keep one's eyes and ears open. (*T. HEDVIG.*) Let's have that beer now.

*HEDVIG nods and goes out into the kitchen.*

GREGERS. So that's your daughter?

HJALMAR. Yes, that is Hedvig.

GREGERS. Your only child?

HJALMAR. Yes, she is the only one. Our greatest joy. (*Drops his voice.*) And also our greatest sorrow, Gregers.

GREGERS. What do you mean?

HJALMAR. There is a grave risk that she may lose her eyesight.

GREGERS. Go blind?

HJALMAR. Yes. As yet there are only the first symptoms, and she may be all right for some while. But the doctor has warned us. It will happen in the end.

GREGERS. What a terrible tragedy. What's the cause?

HJALMAR (*sighs*). It's probably hereditary.

GREGERS (*starts*). Hereditary?

GINA. Hjalmar's mother had weak eyes, too.

HJALMAR. So my father says. Of course, I can't remember.

GREGERS. Poor child. And how does she take it?

HJALMAR. Oh, you don't imagine we have the heart to tell her? She suspects nothing. Carefree and gay, singing like a little bird, she will fly into the night. (*Overcome*.) Oh, it will be the death of me, Gregers.

HEDVIG *brings a tray with beer and glasses, and sets it on the table.*

HJALMAR (*strokes her head*). Thank you, Hedvig.

*She puts her arm round his neck and whispers in his ear.*

No, no sandwiches now. (*Glances at GREGERS*.) Unless you'd like some, Gregers?

GREGERS. No, no thank you.

HJALMAR (*still melancholy*). Well, you might bring a few in, anyway. A crust will be enough for me. But plenty of butter on it, mind.

HEDVIG *nods happily and goes back into the kitchen.*

GREGERS (*follows her with his eyes*). She looks quite strong and healthy, apart from that, I think.

GINA. Yes, there's nothing else the matter with her, thank God.

GREGERS. She's going to look very like you, Mrs Ekdal. How old would she be now?

GINA. Almost exactly fourteen. It's her birthday the day after tomorrow.

GREGERS. Quite big for her age.

GINA. Yes, she's certainly shot up this last year.

GREGERS. Seeing how these young people grow up makes one realize how old one's getting oneself. How long have you two been married now?

GINA. We've been married - er - yes, nearly fifteen years.

GREGERS. Good Lord, is it as long as that?

GINA (*suddenly alert; looks at him*). Yes, that's right.

HJALMAR. It certainly is. Fifteen years, all but a few months.

(*Changes his tone.*) They must have seemed long to you, those years up at the mill, Gregers.

GREGERS. They seemed long at the time. Looking back on them, I hardly know where they went.

OLD EKDAL enters from his room, without his pipe but wearing his old army helmet. He walks a little unsteadily.

EKDAL. Well, Hjalmar, now we can sit down and talk about that — er — What was it we were going to talk about?

HJALMAR (*goes over to him*). Father, we have a guest. Gregers Werle. I don't know if you remember him.

EKDAL (*looks at GREGERS, who has got up*). Werle? The son? What does he want with me?

HJALMAR. Nothing. He's come to see me.

EKDAL. Oh. Nothing's wrong then?

HJALMAR. No, of course not. Nothing at all.

EKDAL (*waves an arm*). Mind you, I'm not afraid. It's just that —

GREGERS (*goes over to him*). I only wanted to bring you a greeting from your old hunting grounds, Lieutenant Ekdal.

EKDAL. Hunting grounds?

GREGERS. Yes — up around Hoydal.

EKDAL. Oh, up there. Yes, I used to know that part well, in the old days.

GREGERS. You were a famous hunter then.

EKDAL. Oh, well. Maybe I was. I won't deny it. You're looking at my uniform. I don't ask anyone's permission to wear it in here. As long as I don't go out into the street in it —

HEDVIG brings a plate of sandwiches and puts it on the table.

HJALMAR. Sit down now, father, and have a glass of beer. Gregers, please.

EKDAL mumbles to himself and stumbles over to the sofa.

GREGERS sits in the chair nearest to him, HJALMAR on the other side of GREGERS. GINA sits a little away from the table, sewing. HEDVIG stands beside her father.

GREGERS. Do you remember, Lieutenant Ekdal, how Hjalmar

and I used to come up and visit you during the summer, and at Christmas?

EKDAL. Did you? No, no, no, I don't remember it. But though I say it myself, I was a first rate shot. I've killed bears too, you know. Nine of them.

GREGERS (*looks at him sympathetically*). And now your hunting days are over?

EKDAL. Oh, I wouldn't say that, my boy. Do a bit of hunting now and again. Not quite the way I used to. You see, the forest - the forest, you see, the forest - (*Drinks.*) How does the forest look up there now? Still good, eh?

GREGERS. Not as good as in your day. It's been thinned out a lot.

EKDAL. Thinned out? Chopped down? (*More quietly, as though in fear.*) That's dangerous. Bad things'll come of that. The forest'll have its revenge.

HJALMAR (*fills his glass*). Have a little more, father.

GREGERS. How can a man like you, a man who loves the open air as you do, bear to live in the middle of a stuffy town, boxed between four walls?

EKDAL (*gives a short laugh and glances at Hjalmar*). Oh, it's not too bad here. Not bad at all.

GREGERS. But what about the cool, sweeping breezes, the free life in the forest, and up on the wide, open spaces among animals and birds? These things which had become part of you?

EKDAL (*smiles*). Hjalmar, shall we show it to him?

HJALMAR (*quickly, a little embarrassed*). Oh, no, father, no. Not tonight.

GREGERS. What does he want to show me?

HJALMAR. Oh, it's only something that - You can see it another time.

GREGERS (*continues speaking to Ekdal*). What I was going to suggest, Lieutenant Ekdal, was that you should come with me back to the mill. I shall be returning there soon. I'm sure we could find you some copying to do up there too. And there's nothing here to keep you cheerful and interested.

EKDAL (*stares at him, amazed*). Nothing here—?

GREGERS. Of course you have Hjalmar; but then he has his own family. And a man like you, who has always been drawn to a life that is wild and free—

EKDAL (*strikes the table*). Hjalmar, he shall see it!

HJALMAR. But father, what's the point of showing it to him now? It's dark.

EKDAL. Nonsense, there's the moonlight. (*Gets up*.) He shall see it, I tell you! Let me come through. Come and help me, Hjalmar.

HEDVIG. Oh, yes, do, father!

HJALMAR (*gets up*). Oh, very well.

GREGERS (*to GINA*). What are they talking about?

GINA. Oh, don't take any notice. It's nothing very much.

EKDAL and HJALMAR go to the rear wall, and each of them pushes back one of the sliding doors. HEDVIG helps the old man. GREGERS remains standing by the sofa. GINA continues calmly with her sewing. Through the open doors can be seen a long and irregularly-shaped loft, full of dark nooks and crannies, and with a couple of brick chimney-pipes coming through the floor. Through small skylights bright moonlight shines on to various parts of the loft, while the rest lies in shadow.

EKDAL (*to GREGERS*). You can come right in if you like.

GREGERS (*goes over to them*). What is it, exactly?

EKDAL. Have a look. Hm!

HJALMAR (*somewhat embarrassed*). This belongs to my father, you understand.

GREGERS (*in the doorway, peers into the loft*). Why, you keep chickens, Lieutenant Ekdal.

EKDAL. I should think we do keep chickens! They've gone to roost now. But you should just see them by daylight!

HEDVIG. And then there's the—!

EKDAL. Ssh! Don't say anything yet.

GREGERS. And you've pigeons too, I see.

EKDAL. Why, yes! Of course we've pigeons. They've got their roosting-boxes up there under the roof. Pigeons like to nest high, you know.

HJALMAR. They're not all ordinary pigeons.

EKDAL. Ordinary! No, I should say not! We've tumblers. And a pair of pouters, too. But come over here! Do you see that hutch over there against the wall?

GREGERS. Yes. What do you use that for?

EKDAL. The rabbits go there at night.

GREGERS. Oh, you have rabbits, too?

EKDAL. You're damn right we've got rabbits. You hear that, Hjalmar? He asks if we've got rabbits! Hm! But now I'll show you! This is really something. Move over, Hedvig. Stand here. That's right. Now look down there. Can you see a basket with straw in it?

GREGERS. Yes. And there's a bird lying in the straw,

EKDAL. Hm! A bird!

GREGERS. Isn't it a duck?

EKDAL. (*huri*). Of course it's a duck.

HJALMAR. Ah, but what *kind* of duck?

HEDVIG. It's not an ordinary duck—

EKDAL. Ssh!

GREGERS. It's not one of those Muscovy ducks, is it?

EKDAL. No, Mr Werle, it's not a Muscovy duck. It's a wild duck.

GREGERS. Oh, is it really? A wild duck?

EKDAL. Yes, that's what it is. That 'bird', as you called it - that's a wild duck, that is. That's our wild duck, my boy.

HEDVIG. My wild duck. I own it.

GREGERS. But can it live up here in this loft? Is it happy here?

EKDAL. Well, naturally she has a trough of water to splash about in.

HJALMAR. Fresh water every other day.

GINA (*turns towards HJALMAR*). Hjalmar dear, it's getting icy cold up here.

EKDAL. Mm. Well, let's shut up, then. It's best not to disturb them when they're sleeping, anyway. Give me a hand, Hedvig.

HJALMAR and HEDVIG *slide the doors together*.

EKDAL. Some other time you must have a proper look at her.

(*Sits in the armchair by the stove.*) Ah, they're strange creatures, you know, these wild ducks.

GREGERS. But how did you manage to catch it, Lieutenant Ekdal?

EKDAL. I didn't catch it. There's a certain gentleman in this town whom we have to thank for that.

GREGERS (*starts slightly*). You don't mean my father, surely?

EKDAL. Indeed I do. Your father. Hm!

HJALMAR. How odd that you should guess that, Gregers.

GREGERS. You told me earlier that you were indebted to my father for so many things, so I thought perhaps—

GINA. Oh, we didn't get it from Mr Werle himself—

EKDAL. All the same, it's Haakon Werle we have to thank for her, Gina. (*To GREGERS.*) He was out in his boat, you see, and he shot her. But his eyesight isn't very good. Hm! So he only winged her.

GREGERS. Oh, I see. She got a couple of pellets in her.

HJALMAR. Yes, two or three.

HEDVIG. She got them under her wing, so that she couldn't fly.

GREGERS. Oh, and so she dived to the bottom, I suppose?

EKDAL (*sleepily, in a thick voice*). Of course. Wild ducks always do that. Dive down to the bottom, as deep as they can go, and hold on with their beaks to the seaweed or whatever they can find down there. And they never come up again.

GREGERS. But your wild duck did come up again, Lieutenant Ekdal.

EKDAL. He had such a damned clever dog, your father. And that dog — he dived down after the duck, and brought her to the surface.

GREGERS (*turns to HJALMAR*). And then you took her in here?

HJALMAR. Not at once. To begin with, they took her home to your father's house. But she didn't seem to thrive there. So Pettersen was told to wring its neck.

EKDAL (*half asleep*). Hm. Yes. Pettersen. Damn fool—

HJALMAR (*speaks more softly*). That was how we got her, you see. Father knows Pettersen, and when he heard all this about the wild duck he got him to give it to us.

GREGERS. And now she's thriving in your loft.

HJALMAR. Yes, she's doing extraordinarily well. She's got fat. Well, she's been in there for so long now that she's forgotten what it's like to live the life she was born for; that's the whole trick.

GREGERS. Yes, you're right there, Hjalmar. Just make sure she never gets a glimpse of the sky or the sea. But I mustn't stay longer. I think your father's fallen asleep.

HJALMAR. Oh, never mind about that.

GREGERS. By the bye, you said you had a room to let.

HJALMAR. Yes, why? Do you know anyone who—?

GREGERS. Could I have it?

HJALMAR. You?

GINA. No, but Mr Werle, it isn't—

GREGERS. Can I have that room? I'd like to move in right away. Tomorrow morning.

HJALMAR. Why, yes, with the greatest pleasure—

GINA. Oh no, Mr Werle, it's not at all the kind of room for you.

HJALMAR. Why, Gina, how can you say that?

GINA. Well, it's dark and poky.

GREGERS. That won't bother me, Mrs Ekdal.

HJALMAR. Personally I think it's quite a nice room. Not too badly furnished, either.

GINA. Don't forget those two who live down below.

GREGERS. Who are they?

GINA. Oh, one of them used to be a tutor—

HJALMAR. A Mr Molvik.

GINA. And the other's a doctor called Relling.

GREGERS. Relling? I know him slightly. He had a practice up at Hoydal once.

GINA. They're a real couple of good-for-nothings. They often go out on the spree and come home very late at night, and aren't always—

GREGERS. One soon gets accustomed to that sort of thing. I hope I shall manage to acclimatize myself like the wild duck.

GINA. Well, I think you ought to sleep on it first, all the same.

GREGERS. You evidently don't want to have me living here, Mrs Ekdal.

GINA. For heaven's sake! How can you think that?

HJALMAR. You're really behaving very strangely, Gina, (*To GREGERS.*) But tell me, are you thinking of staying in town for a while?

GREGERS (*puts on his overcoat*). Yes, now I'm staying.

HJALMAR. But not at home with your father? What do you intend to do?

GREGERS. Ah, if only I knew that, Hjalmar, it wouldn't be so bad. But when one has the misfortune to be called Gregers, with Werle on top of it - Hjalmar, have you ever heard anything so awful?

HJALMAR. Oh, I don't think it's awful at all.

GREGERS. Oh, nonsense. Ugh! I'd want to spit on anyone who had a name like that.

HJALMAR (*laughs*). If you weren't Gregers Werle, what would you like to be?

GREGERS. If I could choose, I think most of all I'd like to be a clever dog.

GINA. A dog?

HEDVIG (*involuntarily*). Oh, no!

GREGERS. Oh, yes. A tremendously clever dog. The sort that dives down after wild ducks when they have plunged to the bottom and gripped themselves fast in the seaweed and the mud.

HJALMAR. Honestly, Gregers, I don't understand a word of all this.

GREGERS. Oh, well, it doesn't mean much really. I'll move in tomorrow morning, then. (*To GINA.*) I shan't cause you any trouble. I do everything for myself. (*To HJALMAR.*) We'll talk about everything else tomorrow. Good night, Mrs Ekdal. (*Nods to HEDVIG.*) Good night.

GINA. Good night, Mr Werle.

HEDVIG. Good night.

HJALMAR (*who has lit a candle*). Wait a moment. I'll have to light you down. It's very dark on the stairs.

GREGERS and HJALMAR go out through the front door.

GINA (*thoughtfully, her sewing in her lap*). Wasn't that a funny thing, saying he'd like to be a dog?

HEDVIG. You know, mother - I think when he said that he meant something else.

GINA. What could he mean?

HEDVIG. I don't know. But I felt as though he meant something different from what he was saying all the time.

GINA. You think so? Yes, it certainly was strange.

HJALMAR (*comes back*). The light was still on. (*Snuffs the candle and puts it down*.) Ah, now I can get a little food inside me at last. (*Begins eating the sandwiches*.) Well, there you are, Gina. If one only keeps one's eyes and ears open—

GINA. How do you mean?

HJALMAR. Well, it's jolly lucky we've managed to let that room at last, isn't it? And, what's more, to a man like Gregers. A dear old friend.

GINA. Well, I don't know what to say about it.

HEDVIG. Oh, mother! You'll see - it'll be such fun!

HJALMAR. You're very awkward. You were aching to let the room, and now we've done it you're not happy.

GINA. Oh, yes I am, Hjalmar. I only wish it had been to someone else. But what do you suppose the old man will say?

HJALMAR. Old Werle? It's none of his business.

GINA. Can't you see? They must have quarrelled again if his son's walked out of the house. You know how things are between those two.

HJALMAR. That may well be, but—

GINA. Now perhaps Mr Werle'll think you're behind it all.

HJALMAR. All right, let him think so, if he wants to! Old Werle's done a great deal for me, I admit it. But that doesn't make me his vassal for life.

GINA. But, Hjalmar dear, he might take it out of grandfather. Maybe now he'll lose the little bit of money he gets through Graaberg.

HJALMAR. Good riddance - I've half a mind to say. Don't you think it's a little humiliating for a man like me to see his grey old father treated like a leper? But I've a feeling the time is getting ripe. (*Takes another sandwich*.) As sure as I have a mission in life, it shall be fulfilled.

HEDVIG. Oh, father, yes! It must, it must!

GINA. Ssh! For heaven's sake, don't wake him.

HJALMAR (*more quietly*). It shall be accomplished. The day will come, I tell you — and that's why it's good we've let that room — it makes me more independent. (*Over by the armchair, emotionally.*) My poor old father! Bless his white hairs! Put your trust in your son. He has broad shoulders — well, strong shoulders, anyway. One fine day you will wake up — (*To GINA.*) Don't you believe it?

GINA (*gets up*). Of course I believe it. But let's get him to bed first.

HJALMAR. Yes, let's.

*They take hold of the old man gently.*

## Act Three

HJALMAR EKDAL's studio. It is morning. The daylight is shining in through the large window in the sloping ceiling, from which the curtain is drawn back. HJALMAR is seated at the table re-touching a photograph. Several others lie in front of him. After a few moments, GINA enters through the front door, wearing a hat and coat. She has a lidded basket on her arm.

HJALMAR. Back already, Gina?

GINA. Yes, I've no time to waste.

*She puts the basket down on a chair and takes off her coat.*

HJALMAR. Did you look in on Gregers?

GINA. I'll say I did. Lovely it looks. He's made it really nice and cosy for himself right from the start.

HJALMAR. Oh, how?

GINA. Manage for himself, he said he would. So he starts lighting the stove. Well, he shoved that damper in so far the whole room got full of smoke. Ugh! It stank like a—

HJALMAR. Oh dear, oh dear.

GINA. That's not all. Then he wants to put out the fire, so he throws all his washing water into the stove. That floor's swimming like a pigsty.

HJALMAR. Oh, I'm sorry about that.

GINA. I've got the caretaker's wife to clean up after him, the pig. But that room won't be fit to live in till this afternoon.

HJALMAR. What's he doing with himself meanwhile?

GINA. He said he'd go out for a bit.

HJALMAR. I went in there too for a moment. After you'd gone.

GINA. So I gathered. I hear you've invited him for lunch.

HJALMAR. Just a little snack, I thought. After all, it's his first day here — we can't very well not. You've got something, I suppose?

GINA. I'll have to find something, won't I?

HJALMAR. Don't skimp it too much. Relling and Molvik may be looking in too, I think. I ran into Relling on the stairs just now, you see, so I couldn't very well—

GINA. Oh, we're having those two as well, are we?

HJALMAR. Good God, a couple more or less, what difference does that make?

OLD EKDAL (*opens his door and looks out*). I say, Hjalmar—  
(Notices GINA.) Oh.

GINA. Do you want something, grandfather?

EKDAL. Oh, no. It doesn't matter. Hm!

*He goes inside again.*

HJALMAR. All right, all right. I say, Gina, a little of that herring salad of yours mightn't be a bad idea. I think Relling and Molvik were out on the tiles again last night.

GINA. Well, as long as they don't come too soon—

HJALMAR. Of course, of course. You take your time.

GINA. Yes, well; and you can get a little work done in the meantime.

HJALMAR. I am working! I'm working as hard as I can!

GINA. I only meant, then you'll have it out of the way.

*She goes out with her basket to the kitchen. HJALMAR sits working at the photograph with a brush, slowly and listlessly.*  
EKDAL (*pokes his head in, looks round the room and says in a whisper*). Are you working?

HJALMAR. Yes, can't you see I'm struggling away at these pictures?

EKDAL. Oh Well, never mind. If you're working so hard, I — Hm!

*He goes out again. His door remains open.*

HJALMAR (*continues silently for a few moments, then puts down his brush and goes across to the door*). Are you working, father?

EKDAL (*grumblingly, from the other room*). If you're working, I'm working too. Hm!

HJALMAR. Yes, yes, of course.

*He goes back to work.*

EKDAL (*after a moment, reappears in the doorway*). You knew — I'm not working as hard as all that, Hjalmar.

HJALMAR. I thought you were writing.

EKDAL. Damn it, that Graaberg can wait a day or two. It's not a matter of life and death, is it?

HJALMAR. No. Anyway, you're not a slave, are you?

EKDAL. And then there's that thing in there—

HJALMAR. I was just thinking of that. Did you want to go in? Shall I open the door for you?

EKDAL. That's not a bad idea.

HJALMAR (*gets up*). Then we'd have it out of the way.

EKDAL. That's what I was thinking. We've got to have it ready by tomorrow morning. It is tomorrow, isn't it? Eh?

HJALMAR. Yes, of course it's tomorrow.

*Hjalmar and Ekdal each slide back one of the doors. Within, the morning sun is shining in through the skylight. Some pigeons are flying back and forth, while others perch, cooing, on the rafters. Now and then the hens cackle further back in the loft.*

HJALMAR. Well now. Get on with it, father.

EKDAL (*goes inside*). Aren't you going to help?

HJALMAR. You know, I think I—(*Sees Gina in the kitchen doorway.*) Me? No, I've no time. I've got to work. Oh — my contraption—

*He pulls a cord. A curtain falls in the attic; the lower section of this consists of a strip of old sailcloth, the upper of a piece of fishing net, stretched taut. The floor of the attic is thus no longer visible.*

HJALMAR (*goes over to the table*). Good. Now perhaps I can be allowed to work in peace for a few minutes.

GINA. Is he messing around in there again?

HJALMAR. Would you rather he sneaked off down to Madam Eriksen's? (*Sits.*) Did you want something? You were saying—

GINA. I only wanted to ask whether you think it'd be all right if we eat in here.

HJALMAR. Yes, we haven't any early sittings today, have we?

GINA. Only those two young lovers who want to be taken together.

HJALMAR. Why the devil can't they be taken together some other day?

GINA. It's all right, dear. I've fixed for them to come after lunch, when you'll be having your nap.

HJALMAR. Oh, good. Very well, then, let's eat in here.

GINA. All right. But there's no hurry about laying the table just yet. You can go on using it for a bit longer.

HJALMAR. Surely you can see I'm working as hard as I can!

GINA. I only meant, then you'll be free later.

*She goes back into the kitchen. Short pause.*

EKDAL (*peers through the net in the loft*). Hjalmar!

HJALMAR. What is it?

EKDAL. Afraid we'll have to move that water-trough after all.

HJALMAR. That's what I've said all along.

EKDAL. Hm – hm – hm.

*He goes away from the door again.*

HJALMAR *works for a few moments, then glances towards the attic and half rises. Hedvig comes in from the kitchen.*

HJALMAR (*sits quickly down*). What do you want?

HEDVIG. I only wanted to be with you, father.

HJALMAR (*after a moment*). What are you nosing around for?

Have you been told to keep an eye on me?

HEDVIG. No, of course not.

HJALMAR. What's your mother up to now?

HEDVIG. Oh, she's in the middle of the herring salad. (*Goes over to the table.*) Isn't there some little thing I could help you with, father?

HJALMAR. Oh, no. I'd better cope with it alone. While I still can. All will be well, Hedvig. As long as your father's strength holds out—

HEDVIG. Oh, no, father, you mustn't say such dreadful things.

*She wanders around for a little, then stops by the open doorway and looks into the loft.*

HJALMAR. What's he up to, Hedvig?

HEDVIG. I think he's making a new path up to the water-trough.

HJALMAR. He'll never manage that by himself. And I'm forced to sit here—!

HEDVIG (*comes over to him*). Let me take the brush, father. I know how to do it.

HJALMAR. Oh no, you'll ruin your eyes.

HEDVIG. Nonsense. Come on, give me the brush.

HJALMAR (*gets up*). Yes, well, it won't take more than a minute or two.

HEDVIG. Oh, what does it matter? (*Takes the brush*.) There, now. (*Sits*.) Here's one I can start on.

HJALMAR. But listen — if you ruin your eyes, I won't take the responsibility. On your own head be it. You hear?

HEDVIG (*busy on the photograph*). Yes, yes, I know.

HJALMAR. You're a clever girl, Hedvig. It'll only take a couple of minutes—

*He squeezes into the loft past the edge of the curtain. HEDVIG sits working. HJALMAR and EKDAL can be heard arguing in the loft.*

HJALMAR (*comes back through the curtain*). Hedvig, get me those pliers from that shelf. And the chisel. (*Turns round towards the loft*.) Now you'll see, father. Just let me show you.

*HEDVIG gets the tools from the bookcase and hands them to him.*

HJALMAR. Ah, thanks. Good thing I came, Hedvig.

*He goes from the doorway. They can be heard working and chatting inside. HEDVIG stands watching them. After a moment, there is a knock on the front door. She does not hear it.*

GREGERS (*enters*! *bareheaded and without an overcoat. He pauses in the doorway* . . . him—

HEDVIG (*turns and goes towards him*). Good morning. Please come in.

GREGERS. Thank you. (*Looks towards the attic*.) Have you got workmen in the house?

HEDVIG. No, that's only father and grandfather. I'll tell them you're here.

GREGERS. No, no, don't do that. I'd rather wait. (*Sits on the sofa*.)

HEDVIG. It's so untidy in here. (*Begins to clear away the photographs*.)

GREGERS. Oh, never mind that. Are those photographs that have to be — er — finished off?

HEDVIG. Yes, just a few I'm helping father with.

GREGERS. Please don't let me disturb you.

HEDVIG. All right.

*She arranges the things again and sits down to work.*

*GREGERS watches her in silence.*

GREGERS. Did the wild duck sleep well last night?

HEDVIG. Yes, thank you, I think so.

GREGERS (*turns towards the loft*). It looks quite different in there by daylight.

HEDVIG. Oh, yes. It varies a lot. In the morning it looks quite different from what it does in the afternoon. And when it's raining it looks different from when it's fine.

GREGERS. You've noticed that, have you?

HEDVIG. Yes, you can't help seeing it.

GREGERS. Do you like being in there with the wild duck, too?

HEDVIG. Yes, when I'm able to—

GREGERS. But you haven't so much spare time, I dare say. You go to school, of course?

HEDVIG. No, not any longer. Father's afraid I shall ruin my eyes.

GREGERS. Oh. So he reads with you himself?

HEDVIG. Father's promised to read with me, but he hasn't found time for it yet.

GREGERS. But isn't there someone else who could help you a little?

HEDVIG. Yes, there's Mr Molvik — he's a student who lives downstairs — but he isn't always — er — altogether quite—

GREGERS. Does he drink?

HEDVIG. I think he does.

GREGERS. Oh. Then you've time for all sorts of things. In there, it's like a different world, I suppose?

HEDVIG. Quite, quite different. And there are so many strange things in there.

GREGERS. Oh?

HEDVIG. Yes. There are big cupboards with books in them. And a lot of the books have got pictures.

GREGERS. Ah.

HEDVIG. And there's an old bureau with drawers and bits that slide out, and a big clock with figures that are meant to pop out. But the clock doesn't work any more.

GREGERS. So time has stopped in there with the wild duck.

HEDVIG. Yes. And there are old paintboxes and things like that. And all the books.

GREGERS. And you read books, I suppose?

HEDVIG. Oh, yes, when I get the chance. But most of them are in English, and I can't understand that. But I look at the pictures. There's a great big book called Harrison's History of London - I should think it must be a hundred years old - and that's got heaps and heaps of pictures in it. On the front there's a picture of death with an hour-glass, and a girl. That's horrid, I think. But then there are lots of other pictures of churches and castles and streets and great ships sailing on the sea.

GREGERS. But tell me, where have all these wonderful things come from?

HEDVIG. Oh, there was an old sea captain who used to live here once, and he brought them home. They called him The Flying Dutchman. It's funny, because he wasn't a Dutchman.

GREGERS. Wasn't he?

HEDVIG. No. But in the end he got lost at sea and left all these things behind.

GREGERS. Tell me - as you sit in there and look at the pictures, don't you feel you want to get out and see the world as it really is?

HEDVIG. Oh, no! I want to stay at home always, and help father and mother.

GREGERS. Help them re-touch photographs?

HEDVIG. No, not only that. Most of all I'd like to learn to engrave pictures like the ones in the English books.

GREGERS. Hm. What does your father say to that?

HEDVIG. I don't think father likes the idea. He's so strange about anything like that. Imagine, he talks about my learning how to plait straw and make baskets! I don't think there can be any future in that.

GREGERS. No, neither do I.

HEDVIG. But father's right when he says that if I'd learned basket-making I could have made the new basket for the wild duck.

GREGERS. Yes, so you could. It was your job really, wasn't it?

HEDVIG. Yes, because it's my wild duck.

GREGERS. Of course it is.

HEDVIG. Oh, yes. I own it. But father and grandfather are allowed to borrow it whenever they want.

GREGERS. Oh? And what do they do with it?

HEDVIG. Oh, they look after it and build things for it, and that kind of thing.

GREGERS. I should think so. The wild duck's the most important thing in there, isn't it?

HEDVIG. Oh, yes. She's a real wild bird, you see. That's why I feel so sorry for her. She's got no one to care for, poor thing.

GREGERS. No family like the rabbits.

HEDVIG. No. The hens have got friends they used to be chicks with; but she's been separated from all her family. And there's so much that's strange about the wild duck. No one knows her. And no one knows where she came from.

GREGERS. And she's been down to the bottom of the deep.

HEDVIG (*glances quickly at him and represses a smile*). Why do you say 'the bottom of the deep'?

GREGERS. What should I have said?

HEDVIG. You could have said 'the sea bed', or just 'the bottom of the sea'.

GREGERS. Oh, why can't I say 'the bottom of the deep'?

HEDVIG. Yes, but it always sounds so odd to me when other people talk about 'the bottom of the deep'.

GREGERS. Why? Tell me.

HEDVIG. No, I won't. It's silly.

GREGERS. Not at all. Tell me now, why did you smile?

HEDVIG. It's because if I suddenly - without thinking - remember what's in there, I always think of it all as being 'the bottom of the deep'. But that's just silly.

GREGERS. No, you mustn't say that.

HEDVIG. Well, it's only a loft.

GREGERS (*looks hard at her*). Are you sure?

HEDVIG (*astonished*). That it's only a loft?

GREGERS. Yes. You are quite certain about that?

HEDVIG *stares silently at him, open-mouthed*. GINA comes from the kitchen with cutlery and tablecloth.

GREGERS (*gets up*). I'm afraid I've come too early.

GINA. Oh, you've got to sit somewhere. Anyway, I'll be ready in a minute. Clear the table, Hedvig.

HEDVIG *clears the table. She and GINA lay the cloth, etc., during the following scene. GREGERS sits in an armchair and turns the pages of an album.*

GREGERS. I hear you know how to re-touch photographs, Mrs Ekdal.

GINA (*gives him a quick glance*). Why — yes, I know how.

GREGERS. That was a lucky chance, wasn't it?

GINA. Why lucky?

GREGERS. Since Hjalmar was to become a photographer, I mean.

HEDVIG. Mother can take photographs, too.

GINA. Oh, yes, I've had to teach myself that.

GREGERS. Then it's really you who run the business?

GINA. Yes, when Hjalmar hasn't time himself, I—

GREGERS. His old father takes up a lot of his time. I dare say.

GINA. Yes. And anyway it's no real job for a man like Hjalmar to have to take the portrait of just anyone.

GREGERS. I quite agree. But after all, he has chosen this profession—

GINA. Hjalmar isn't just an ordinary photographer, you know, Mr Werle.

GREGERS. I'm sure he isn't. But—

*A shot is fired inside the loft.*

GREGERS (*jumps up*). What's that?

GINA. Ugh, they're shooting again.

GREGERS. Do they shoot, too?

HEDVIG. They go hunting.

GREGERS. What! (*By the door of the loft.*) Are you hunting, Hjalmar?

HJALMAR (*from beyond the curtain*). Are you here? Oh, I didn't know. I was so busy with—(*To HEDVIG.*) Why didn't you tell us?

*Comes into the studio.*

GREGERS. Do you go shooting in the loft?

HJALMAR (*shows him a double-barrelled pistol*). Oh, only with this.

GINA. You and grandfather'll do yourselves an injury one of these fine days with that popgun.

HJALMAR (*irritated*). This is a pistol, as I think I've told you before.

GINA. I don't see that that improves matters.

GREGERS. So you've turned hunter too, Hjalmar?

HJALMAR. Oh, I just go out after rabbits now and then. Mostly for the old man's sake, you know.

GINA. Men are funny creatures. Always got to have something to diverge themselves with.

HJALMAR (*bad-temperedly*). Quite so. As Gina says, we've always got to have something to divert ourselves with.

GINA. Isn't that what I said?

HJALMAR. Hm. Well—(*To GREGERS.*) Yes, you see, as luck would have it the loft's placed in such a way that no one can hear us when we shoot. (*Puts down the pistol on the top shelf of the bookcase.*) Don't touch that pistol, Hedvig. One of the barrels is loaded. Now don't forget.

GREGERS (*peers n' through the net*). You've a shotgun too, I see.

HJALMAR. That's father's old gun. It's no use any longer, something's gone wrong with the 'ock. But it's quite fun to have it around. We can take it to pieces now and then and clean it and grease it and put it together again. Of course it's mostly father who fiddles around like that.

HEDVIG (*to GREGERS*). Now you can see the wild duck properly.

GREGERS. Yes, I was just looking at her. She droops a little on one wing, doesn't she?

HJALMAR. No wonder. That's where she was shot.

GREGERS. And she trails one foot a little. Am I right?

HJALMAR. Perhaps just a little.

HEDVIG. Yes, that's where the dog bit her.

HJALMAR. But otherwise there's nothing wrong with her. It's really marvellous when you think she's had a charge of shot in her and has been between the teeth of a dog—

GREGERS (*glances at HEDVIG*). And has been for so long at the bottom of the deep.

HEDVIG (*smiles*). Yes.

GINA (*laying the table*). Oh, that blessed wild duck. You make too much of a song and dance about her.

HJALMAR. Hm. Are you nearly ready with that?

GINA. Yes, I shan't be a minute. Hedvig, come and give me a hand.

GINA and HEDVIG go out into the kitchen.

HJALMAR (*in a low voice*). I think you'd better not stand there watching father. He doesn't like it.

GREGERS comes away from the lost door.

I'd better close up before the others arrive. (*Claps his hands to frighten the birds.*) Shoo, shoo! Get away with you! (*Pulls up the curtain and closes the doors as he speaks.*) I invented these gadgets myself. It's really rather fun to have something like this to fiddle with, and fix when it goes wrong. We've got to have it, because Gina doesn't like rabbits and hens in here.

GREGERS. No, no. It's your wife who runs the studio, I suppose?

HJALMAR. I generally leave the details of the business to her. Then I can lock myself away in the parlour and think about more important things.

GREGERS. What kind of things, Hjalmar?

HJALMAR. I wonder you haven't asked me that before. But perhaps you haven't heard about my invention?

GREGERS. Your invention? No.

HJALMAR. Really? Haven't you? Oh no, I suppose being cut off up there in those forests—

GREGERS. So you've invented something?

HJALMAR. It's not quite finished yet. But I'm working on it. As you can imagine, when I decided to give up my life to

the service of photography it wasn't because I wanted to take portraits of the bourgeoisie.

GREGERS. No, that's what your wife said just now.

HJALMAR. I made a vow that if I was going to dedicate my powers to this craft, I would exalt it to the level of both an art and a science. And so I decided to make this astonishing invention.

GREGERS. But what *is* this invention? What's the idea behind it?

HJALMAR. Oh, my dear fellow, you mustn't ask me about details yet. It takes time, you know. And you mustn't think it's vanity that's inspiring me to do this. It isn't for myself that I'm doing this. Oh, no. I have a mission in life that I can never forget.

GREGERS. What kind of mission?

HJALMAR. Have you forgotten that old man with the silver hair?

GREGERS. Your poor father. Yes, but there isn't very much you can do for him, is there?

HJALMAR. I can rekindle his self-respect by restoring to the name of Ekdal the honour and dignity which it once had.

GREGERS. And that's your mission?

HJALMAR. I want to save that shipwrecked soul, yes. Right from the moment the storm broke over him, he was a wreck. And during those terrible investigations he was no longer himself. That pistol over there, Gregers — the one we use for shooting rabbits — has played its part in the tragedy of the House of Ekdal.

GREGERS. Really? That pistol?

HJALMAR. When sentence had been pronounced and he was about to be taken to prison — he had the pistol in his hand —

GREGERS. You mean — ?

HJALMAR. Yes. But he didn't dare. He was a coward. His spirit had been broken. Can you understand it? He, a soldier, who had killed nine bears, and was descended from two lieutenant-colonels — one after the other, of course — Can you understand it, Gregers?

GREGERS. Yes, I understand it very well.

HJALMAR. I can't. But that wasn't the last time that pistol played a part in the history of our family. When he was in his grey garb, under lock and key — oh, it was a terrible time for me, believe me. I kept the blinds drawn over both my windows. When I peeped out I saw that the sun still shone. I couldn't understand it. I saw people in the street, laughing and chatting, about trivial things. I couldn't understand it. I thought the whole world ought to stand still, as though in eclipse.

GREGERS. That is how I felt when my mother died.

HJALMAR. At such a moment, Hjalmar Ekdal held the pistol pointed at his own breast.

GREGERS. You mean you, too, thought of — ?

HJALMAR. Yes.

GREGERS. But you didn't fire?

HJALMAR. No. At the critical moment I triumphed over myself. I decided to remain alive. But I can tell you, Gregers, it takes courage under such circumstances to choose life.

GREGERS. Yes, well — that depends on how one —

HJALMAR. Believe me, Gregers, I am right. Anyway, it was better so. Now I shall make my invention; and then, Dr Relling agrees with me, father may be allowed to wear his uniform again. I shall demand it as my sole reward.

GREGERS. So it's the uniform he — ?

HJALMAR. Yes, that's what he longs for most. You can't imagine how my heart bleeds for him. Every time we have any little family celebration — for example, Gina's and my wedding anniversary, or whatever it may be — the old man appears as the lieutenant he used to be in happier days. But if there's a knock on the door he scampers back to his room as fast as his old legs will carry him, because he daren't show himself to strangers. Oh, it's heart-rending for a son to have to witness such things, Gregers.

GREGERS. How soon do you expect this invention to be ready?

HJALMAR. Good heavens, you can't expect me to work to a schedule. An invention is something that even the inventor himself isn't completely master of. It depends largely on

intuition – on inspiration – and it's almost impossible to predict when that's going to come.

GREGERS. But you're making progress?

HJALMAR. Of course I am. I think about it every day. It's always with me. Every afternoon, after I've eaten, I shut myself up in the parlour where I can meditate in peace. But I mustn't be rushed. That won't help at all. Relling says so too.

GREGERS. And you don't think that all that business in the loft distracts you too much, and dissipates your energies?

HJALMAR. No, no, no – quite the contrary. I can't spend all my time brooding over the same exhausting problem. I must have some distraction while I wait for the inspiration to come. Inspiration, you see, comes when it comes.

GREGERS. My dear Hjalmar, I really believe there is something of the wild duck in you.

HJALMAR. The wild duck? How do you mean?

GREGERS. You've plunged to the bottom and are holding on to the seaweed.

HJALMAR. Are you referring to that stroke of fate which crippled father – and me as well?

GREGERS. Not that so much. I wouldn't say you've been crippled. You've wandered into a poisonous swamp, Hjalmar. You've got a creeping disease in your body, and you've sunk to the bottom to die in the dark.

HJALMAR. Me? Lie in the dark? Now really, Gregers, you must stop that talk.

GREGERS. Don't worry. I shall get you up again. I've found a mission in life too, you see. I found it yesterday.

HJALMAR. I dare say, but please leave me out of it. I can assure you that – apart from a certain melancholy, which is easily explained – I'm as contented with life as anyone could wish to be.

GREGERS. That's another effect of the poison.

HJALMAR. Oh, my dear Gregers, do stop talking about diseases and poisons. I'm not used to this kind of conversation. In my house we don't talk about disagreeable matters.

GREGERS. No, I can well believe that.

HJALMAR. Yes – it's not good for me, you see. And you won't find any poisonous fumes here, as you insinuate. In the poor photographer's home the roof is low, I know that well. And the circumstances are narrow. But I am an inventor, Gregers – the breadwinner for my family – and that lifts me above the poverty of my surroundings. Ah, lunch!

GINA and HEDVIG bring in bottles of beer, a decanter of aquavit, glasses, etc. At the same time, RELLING and MOLVIK enter from the passage. Neither has a hat or overcoat. MOLVIK is dressed in black.

GINA (*putting the things on the table*). Trust those two to come on time!

RELLING. Molvik thought he could smell herring salad, so there was no holding him. Good morning again, Ekdal.

HJALMAR. Gregers, may I present Mr Molvik? Dr – but of course you know Relling.

GREGERS. Yes, we have met.

RELLING. Oh, it's Mr Werle Junior. Yes, we two have clashed before, up at Hoydal. You moved in here?

GREGERS. I moved in this morning.

RELLING. Molvik and I live underneath, so you haven't got far to go for a doctor or a priest, if you should ever need either of them.

GREGERS. Thank you, I well may. Yesterday we were thirteen at table.

HJALMAR. Oh, don't start that awful business again.

RELLING. Take it easy, Ekdal. You were one of the twelve.

HJALMAR. I hope so, for my family's sake. But now let's sit down, and eat and drink and be merry.

GREGERS. Oughtn't we to wait for your father?

HJALMAR. No, he wants his taken in to him later. Come along now, everybody!

*The men sit down at the table and start eating and drinking.*

GINA and HEDVIG come and go, waiting on them.

RELLING. Molvik was as tight as a drum again last night, Mrs Ekdal.

GINA. Oh? Last night again?

RELLING. Didn't you hear him when I brought him home?

GINA. No, I can't say I did.

RELLING. That's as well. Molvik was *awful* last night.

GINA. Is this true, Molvik?

MOLVIK. Let us draw a veil over the events of last night. It was not a manifestation of my better self.

RELLING (*to GREGERS*). It comes on him like an inspiration. And then I have to go out and paint the town with him. Molvik's daemonic, you see.

GREGERS. Daemonic?

RELLING Yes, daemonic.

GREGERS. Hin.

RELLING. And people who are born daemonic can't keep a straight course through life. They have to go off the rails now and then. Well, so you're still sticking it out at that ugly black mill, are you?

GREGERS. I have stuck it out until now.

RELLING. And did you manage to enforce that claim you went round pestering everyone with?

GREGERS. Claim? (*Understands him.*) I see.

HJALMAR. Have you been acting as a debt-collector, Gregers?

GREGERS. Oh, nonsense.

RELLING. Oh, yes he has. He went round all the workmen's cottages, shoving something in their faces which he called 'the claim of the ideal'.

GREGERS. I was young then.

RELLING. You're right there. You were very young. And as for that claim of the ideal - you never got anyone to honour it before I left.

GREGERS. Nor since, either.

RELLING. Then I hope you've grown wise enough to reduce your demands a little.

GREGERS. Not when I stand face to face with a man.

HJALMAR. Well, that sounds reasonable enough. A little butter, Gina.

RELLING. And a slice of pork for Molvik.

MOLVIK. Oh no, not pork!

*There is a knock on the door of the loft.*

HJALMAR. Open the door, Hedvig. Father wants to come out.

HEDVIG goes across and opens the door a little. OLD EKDAL comes out with a fresh rabbit skin. She closes the door behind him.

EKDAL. Morning, gentlemen. Good hunting today! I've shot a big one.

HJALMAR. Why did you have to skin it before I came?

EKDAL. Salted it too. It's good, tender meat, rabbit meat. Sweet, too. Tastes like sugar! Enjoy your dinner, gentlemen!

*He goes into his room.*

MOLVIK (*gets up*). Excuse me — I can't — I must — quickly —

RELLING. Drink some soda water, man!

MOLVIK (*hurries out*). Ah — ah!

*He goes out through the front door.*

RELLING (*to HJALMAR*). Let's drink to the old huntsman.

HJALMAR (*clinks glasses with him*). A great sportsman at the end of the road.

RELLING. His hair tempered with grey— (*Drinks.*) By the way, tell me, is his hair grey or white?

HJALMAR. Oh — somewhere between the two. Actually, he hasn't very many hairs left on his head.

RELLING. Well, one can get through the world with a wig, as one can with a mask. You're a lucky man, Ekdal. A beautiful mission to fight for—

HJALMAR. And I do fight for it, believe me.

RELLING. And a clever wife, jogging quietly in and out in her felt slippers, rocking her hips and making everything nice and comfortable for you.

HJALMAR. Yes, Gina. (*Nods to her.*) You are a good companion to have on life's journey.

GINA. Oh, get along with you!

RELLING. And then you have your little Hedvig.

HJALMAR (*moved*). My child, yes. Above all, my child! Hedvig, come to me. (*Strokes her hair.*) What day is it tomorrow, Hedvig?

HEDVIG (*shakes him*). Oh no, father, you mustn't tell them!

HJALMAR. It wounds me like a knife through the heart when I

think how poor it must be. Just a little party in the attic—  
HEDVIG. But father, that's just what's so wonderful!

RELLING. And just you wait till your father's ready with his great invention, Hedvig.

HJALMAR. Yes, then you'll see! Hedvig, I have resolved to secure your future. You shall never want. I shall make it a condition that you get — er — something or other. That shall be the poor inventor's sole reward.

HEDVIG (*whispers, her arm round his neck*). Oh, dear, kind father!

RELLING (*to GREGERS*). Well, don't you find it pleasant for a change to sit down to a good meal surrounded by a happy family?

HJALMAR. Yes, I think I appreciate these hours at the table more than anything.

GREGERS. Personally I don't like poisonous fumes.

RELLING. Poisonous fumes!

HJALMAR. Oh, for heaven's sake don't start that again.

GINA. By God, you'll find no fumes in here. Mi Werle! I give the whole place a good airing every day.

GREGERS (*leaving the table*). You can't drive out the stench I mean by opening the windows.

HJALMAR. Stench!

GINA. How do you like that, Hjalmar?

RELLING. I beg your pardon — you couldn't possibly have brought the stench in yourself from those pits up there?

GREGERS. Yes, it's like you to call what I bring with me a stench.

RELLING (*goes over to him*). Listen, Mr Werle Junior. I've a strong suspicion you're still carrying that 'claim of the ideal' unabridged in your back pocket.

GREGERS. I carry it in my heart.

RELLING. Well, wherever you have the bloody thing I'm damned if I'll let you blackmail anyone with it as long as I'm in this house.

GREGERS. And if I choose to ignore your warning?

RELLING. Then you'll go headfirst down those stairs. Now you know.

HJALMAR (*gets up*). But — but, Relling—!

GREGERS. All right, throw me out.

GINA (*goes between them*). Relling, you can't do that. But I must say, Mr Werle, after the mess you made with your stove you're in no position to come and complain to me about fumes.

*There is a knock on the front door.*

HEDVIG. Mother, someone's knocking.

HJALMAR. Oh, now that's going to start.

GINA. Let me take care of it.

*She goes over, opens the door and steps back in surprise.*

Oh! Oh, no!

HAAKON WERLE, *in a fur-lined coat with a fur collar, takes a step into the room.*

WERLE. I beg your pardon, but I believe my son is living in this house.

GINA (*swallows*). Yes.

HJALMAR (*goes towards him*). Wouldn't you do us the honour, sir, to—?

WERLE. Thank you, I only want to speak to my son.

GREGERS. Well? I'm here. What is it?

WERLE. I want to speak to you in your room.

GREGERS. Oh? In my room?

*Moves towards the door.*

GINA. No, for heaven's sake, that's in no state—

WERLE. Out in the passage, then. I want to speak with you alone.

HJALMAR. You can do that here, sir. Relling, come into the parlour.

*HJALMAR and RELLING go out to the right. GINA takes HEDVIG into the kitchen.*

GREGERS (*after a short pause*). Well. Now we're alone.

WERLE. You let drop a few remarks last night about— And since you've now come to lodge with the Ekdals I can only assume that you intend some action directed against me.

GREGERS. I intend to open the eyes of Hjalmar Ekdal. He must see his situation as it really is. That is all.

WERLE. And that is the mission in life you spoke of yesterday?

GREGERS. Yes. It's the only one you have left me.

WERLE. So it's I who have soured your mind, Gregers?

GREGERS. You have soured my whole life. Oh, I'm not just thinking of what happened to my mother. But it's you I have to thank for the fact that I'm continually haunted by a guilty conscience.

WERLE. Oh, so it's your conscience that's queasy, is it?

GREGERS. I ought to have stood up to you when these traps were laid for Lieutenant Ekdal. I ought to have warned him. I knew in my mind what was going on.

WERLE. Then you ought to have spoken out.

GREGERS. I was frightened. I was a coward. I was so miserably afraid of you then. And long afterwards.

WERLE. You seem to have got over that very well now.

GREGERS. Yes, thank God I have. The crimes that have been committed against old Ekdal, by me and by — others — can never be undone. But at least I can free Hjalmar from the conspiracy of silence and deceit which is killing him here.

WERLE. And you think that'd be doing him a service?

GREGERS. I have no doubt of it.

WERLE. You think this photographer is the kind of man who would thank you for such a proof of friendship?

GREGERS. Yes. He is that kind of man.

WERLE. Well. We shall see.

GREGERS. And besides — if I am to go on living, I must try to find some cure for my sick conscience.

WERLE. Your conscience has been sickly ever since you were a child. There's no cure for it. That's an heirloom from your mother, Gregers. The only thing she left you.

GREGERS (*with a scornful smile*). Haven't you got over your disappointment yet? You miscalculated badly, didn't you, when you thought you'd get rich through her?

WERLE. Don't try to distract me with irrelevancies. Are you still resolved to carry out your intention of gilding Ekdal on to what you suppose to be the right path?

GREGERS. Yes. I am resolved.

WERLE. In that case I might have saved myself the trouble of

climbing the stairs. I don't suppose it's any use now asking if you'll come back home?

GREGERS. No.

WERLE. And you won't enter the firm either, I suppose?

GREGERS. No.

WERLE. Very good. But since I am intending to enter into a new marriage, I will arrange for the estate to be divided between us.

GREGERS (*quickly*). No, I don't want that.

WERLE. You don't want it?

GREGERS. No. My conscience won't allow me.

WERLE (*after a moment*). Are you going back to the mill?

GREGERS. No. I have left your service.

WERLE. But what will you do?

GREGERS. I shall simply fulfil my mission. That is all.

WERLE. But afterwards? How will you live?

GREGERS. I have saved a little out of my salary.

WERLE. Yes, but how long will that last?

GREGERS. I think it will see me through.

WERLE. What does that mean?

GREGERS. I think you've asked me enough questions.

WERLE. Goodbye then, Gregers.

GREGERS. Goodbye.

HAAKON WERLE goes out.

HJALMAR (*looks in*). Has he gone?

GREGERS. Yes.

HJALMAR and RELLING come in. GINA and HEDVIG enter from the kitchen.

RELLING. Well, that's the end of our lunch.

GREGERS. Get your coat, Hjalmar. You and I must take a long walk together.

HJALMAR. Yes, let's. What did your father want? Was it anything to do with me?

GREGERS. Come along. We must have a little talk. I'll go and fetch my coat.

*He goes out through the front door.*

GINA. I don't like you going out with him, Hjalmar.

RELLING. She's right. Stay here with us.

HJALMAR (*takes his hat and overcoat*). What! When an old schoolfellow feels the need to pour out his heart to me—?

RELLING. But for Christ's sake — don't you see the fellow's mad, twisted, out of his mind?

GINA. There you are! Well, what do you expect? His mother had weird fits like that too, sometimes.

HJALMAR. All the more need for someone to keep a friendly eye on him, then. (*To GINA.*) Make sure dinner's ready in good time. Goodbye for now.

*He goes out through the front door.*

RELLING. What a pity that fellow didn't fall into one of his own mines and drop right down to Hell!

GINA. Mercy on us! Why do you say that?

RELLING (*mutter*s). Oh, I have my reasons.

GINA. Do you think young Mr Werle's really mad?

RELLING. No, worse luck. He's no madder than most people. He's sick all right, though.

GINA. What do you think' wrong with him?

RELLING. I'll tell you, Mr Ekdal. He's suffering from a surfeit of self-righteousness.

GINA. Surfeit of self-righteousness?

HEDVIG. Is that a disease?

RELLING. Yes. It's a national disease. But it only very seldom becomes acute. (*Nods to GINA.*) Thanks for the lunch.

*He goes out through the front door.*

GINA (*walks round uneasily*). 'Egh! That Gregers Werle. He always was a queer fish.

HEDVIG (*stands by the table and looks searchingly at her*). I think this is all very strange.

## Act Four

HJALMAR EKDAI's studio. A photograph has just been taken; a camera with a cloth over it, a stand, two or three chairs, a folding table, etc., stand around the room. Afternoon light; the sun is just going down; a little later it begins to grow dark. GINA is standing in the open doorway with a small box and a wet glass plate in her hand, talking to someone outside.

GINA. Yes, definitely. When I make a promise I always keep it. I'll have the first dozen ready by Monday. Goodbye, goodbye.

*The other person goes downstairs. GINA closes the door, puts the glass plate in the box and places the latter in the covered camera.*

HEDVIG (*comes in from the kitchen*). Have they gone?

GINA (*tidying up*). Yes, thank God, I got rid of them at last.

HEDVIG. Why do you suppose father hasn't come home yet?

GINA. Are you sure he's not down with Relling?

HEDVIG. No, he's not there. I've just run down the back stairs to ask.

GINA. And his dinner's getting cold too, I suppose?

HEDVIG. It's funny — father's always on time for dinner.

GINA. Oh, he'll be here soon. You'll see.

HEDVIG. I wish he'd come. Everything seems so strange suddenly.

GINA (*cries out*). Here he is!

*HJALMAR EKDAI comes in through the front door.*

HEDVIG (*runs towards him*). Oh, father! Oh, we've waited and waited for you!

GINA (*gives him a glance*). You've been a long time, Hjalmar.

HJALMAR (*without looking at her*). Yes, I have rather, haven't I?

*He takes off his overcoat. GINA and HEDVIG try to help him but he gestures them away.*

GINA. Have you eaten with Werle?

HJALMAR (*hangs up his coat*). No.

GINA (*goes towards the kitchen door*). I'll bring in your food, then.

HJALMAR. No, never mind the food. I don't want any.

HEDVIG (*goes closer*). Aren't you well, father?

HJALMAR. Well? Oh yes, tolerably. We had rather a tiring walk, Greger and I.

GINA. You shouldn't do that, Hjalmar. You're not used to it.

HJALMAR. But there are a lot of things in life a man's got to get used to. (*Wanders around a little*.) Anyone been here while I was out?

GINA. Only those two sweethearts.

HJALMAR. No new orders?

GINA. No, not today.

HEDVIG. There'll be some tomorrow, father. You'll see.

HJALMAR. Let's hope so. Because tomorrow I intend to start working in real earnest.

HEDVIG. Tomorrow? But don't you remember what day it is tomorrow?

HJALMAR. Ah, that's true. Well, the day after tomorrow, then.

From now on I'm going to do everything myself. I'm going to manage the whole business on my own.

GINA. But why should you do that, Hjalmar? It'll only make you miserable. No, I'll take care of the photography, and you can go on puzzling with your invention.

HEDVIG. And think of the wild duck, father. And all the hens and rabbits and--

HJALMAR. Don't talk to me about a that nonsense. From now on I shall never set foot in that I ft again.

HEDVIG. But father, you promised tomorrow we'd have a party--

HJALMAR. Hm, that's true. Well, from the day after tomorrow then. I'd like to wring the neck of that damned wild duck.

HEDVIG (*screams*). The wild duck!

GINA. I never heard such nonsense.

HEDVIG (*shaking him*). But father! It's my wild duck!

HJALMAR. That's why I won't do it. I haven't the heart to - I

haven't the heart - because of you, Hedvig. But I know in my heart that I ought to do it. I ought not to allow any creature to live under my roof which has been in *his* hands.

GINA. For heaven's sake! Just because grandfather got it from that wretched Pettersen—

HJALMAR (*wandering around*). There are certain demands -- demands a man makes of himself - how shall I put it? - a striving for perfection - one might say the demands of an ideal -- which a man may not ignore without danger to his soul.

HEDVIG (*goes after him*). But father, the wild duck! The poor wild duck!

HJALMAR (*stops*). I've told you I shall spare it. For your sake. I shall not touch a hair of its - well, as I told you, I shall spare it. I have more important tasks than that to get down to. But you'd better go and take your walk now, Hedvig. It's getting dark - the light won't hurt your eyes now.

HEDVIG. No, I won't bother to go out today.

HJALMAR. Yes, you must. You screw up your eyes so; all these fumes in here are bad for you. The air under this roof is unclean.

HEDVIG. All right, all right. I'll run down the back stairs and go for a little walk. My coat and hat? Oh, they're in my room. Father, you won't hurt the wild duck while I'm out?

HJÄLMAR. Not a feather of its head shall be touched. (*Presses her to him*.) You and I, Hedvig - we two — ! Well, run along.

HEDVIG *nods to her parents and goes out through the kitchen*.  
HJALMAR (*walks around without looking up*). Gina.

GINA. Yes?

HJALMAR. From tomorrow - or let's say the day after tomorrow - I'd like to keep the household accounts myself.

GINA. You want to look after the household accounts too, now?

HJALMAR. Yes. I want to find out where the money comes from.

GINA. Well, heaven knows that won't take you long.

HJALMAR. One would imagine it would. You seem to make it

go a remarkably long way. (*Stops and looks at her.*) How do you do it?

GINA. It's because Hedvig and I need so little.

HJALMAR. Is it true that father gets paid very generously for the copying he does for Mr Werle?

GINA. I don't know if it's so very generous. But then I don't know what that kind of work is worth

HJALMAR. Well, roughly how much does he get? Come on, tell me!

GINA. It varies. On an average about what it costs us to keep him, and a bit of pocket money over.

HJALMAR. What it costs us to keep him! And you never told me!

GINA. How could I! You were so happy because you thought he got everything from you.

HJALMAR. And all the time he gets it from Mr Werle!

GINA. Oh, there's more where that comes from.

HJALMAR. I suppose we'd better light that lamp.

GINA (*lights it*). Of course, we don't know if it's the old man himself. It might easily be Graaberg—

HJALMAR. Why drag in Graaberg?

GINA. No, I don't know. I just thought—

HJALMAR. Hm!

GINA. I didn't get this work for grandfather. It was Berta — when she came to live there.

HJALMAR. Your voice has gone funny.

GINA (*puts the shade on the lamp*). My voice?

HJALMAR. And your hands are trembling. Do you deny it?

GINA (*firmly*). Don't beat about the<sup>1</sup> ush, Hjalmar. What's he been telling you about me?

HJALMAR. Is it true — *an* it be true — that there was a kind of relationship between you and Mr Werle when you were in his service?

GINA. No, it's not true. Not at that time. Oh, he was after me, all right. And Mrs Werle thought there was something doing; she created a great hullabaloo, and pulled my hair, she did, so I gave my notice and went.

HJALMAR. But it happened afterwards!

GINA. Yes, well, I went home. And mother – she wasn't such a simple soul as you thought, Hjalmar. She kept talking to me about one thing and another. Well, the old man was a widower by then, you see—

HJALMAR. Go on!

GINA. Well, I suppose you'd better know. He wouldn't give in till he'd had his way.

HJALMAR. And this is the mother of my child! How could you keep such a thing from me?

GINA. Yes, it was very wrong. I ought to have told you about it long ago.

HJALMAR. You ought to have told me at once. Then I'd have known what kind of woman you were.

GINA. If I had, would you have married me?

HJALMAR. What do you think?

GINA. Yes, well, that's why I didn't dare to say anything to you at the time. You know how fond I'd grown of you. How could I throw away my whole life?

HJALMAR (*walking about*). And this is the mother of my Hedvig! And to know that everything I see around me— (*Kicks a chair.*) — my entire home — I owe to a predecessor in your favours! Oh, that seductive old Werle!

GINA. Do you regret the fifteen years we have lived together?

HJALMAR (*stops in front of her*). Have you not every day, every moment, regretted the web of concealment and deceit that you've spun around me like a spider? Answer me that! Do you mean to tell me that all this time you haven't been living in anguish and remorse?

GINA. Oh, my dear Hjalmar, I've had enough to think about trying to run the house without—

HJALMAR. Then you never probe your past with a questioning eye?

GINA. You know, I'd almost forgotten the whole dirty business.

HJALMAR. Oh, this soulless, unfeeling complacency! It always fills me with moral indignation. And what is more, you don't even regret it!

GINA. Yes, but tell me, Hjalmar. What would have become of you if you hadn't had a wife like me?

HJALMAR. Like you?

GINA. Yes; I've always been a little more down-to-earth and practical than you. Well, it's natural, I suppose, I'm just that much older.

HJALMAR. What would have become of me!

GINA. Yes. You'd gone a bit off the rails when you met me. You surely won't deny that.

HJALMAR. You call that going off the rails? Oh, you don't understand what it's like when a man is full of sorrow and despair. Particularly a man of my fiery temperament.

GINA. No, no. Perhaps I don't. Anyway, I'm not complaining; you became such a good man once you'd got a house and home of your own. And now it was getting to be so homely and nice here; and Hedvig and I were just thinking we might be able to spend a little on food and clothes.

HJALMAR. Yes, in this swamp of deceit.

GINA. Oh, why did that repulsive little man have to come to our house?

HJALMAR. I too used to think this was a good home. It was a delusion. Where shall I now find the strength I need to transfer my invention into terms of reality? Perhaps it will die with me. And it will be your past, Gina, which will have killed it.

GINA (*on the verge of tears*). No, you mustn't say things like that, Hjalmar. All our learned life I've never thought of anyone but you.

HJALMAR. I ask you — what will become of the breadwinner's dream now? As I lay in there on the sofa brooding over the invention, I had a feeling that it would devour my energies to the last drop. I sensed that the day on which I held the patent in my hands — that day would spell my release. And it was my dream that you should live on as the late inventor's prosperous widow.

GINA (*drying her tears*). Now you mustn't talk like that, Hjalmar. May the good Lord never let me live to see myself a widow!

HJALMAR. Oh, what does it matter? It's all finished now.  
Everything!

GREGERS WERLE *cautiously opens the front door and looks in.*

GREGERS. May one come in?

HJALMAR. Yes, come in.

GREGERS (*comes forward with a radiant, gratified expression and holds out his hands to them*). Well, my dear friends! (*Looks from one to the other and whispers to Hjalmar.*) Hasn't it happened yet?

HJALMAR. Oh, it has happened.

GREGERS. It has!

HJALMAR. I have just lived through the bitterest moment of my life.

GREGERS. But also, surely, the most sublime.

HJALMAR. Well, we've put that behind us. For the time being, anyway.

GINA. May God forgive you, Mr Werle.

GREGERS (*greatly amazed*). But what I don't see is—

HJALMAR. What don't you see?

GREGERS. From such a crisis there must spring a mutual understanding on which a whole new life can be founded — a partnership built on truth, without concealment.

HJALMAR. Yes, I know, Gregers. I know.

GREGERS. I felt so sure that when I walked through that door you would be standing there transfigured, and that my eyes would be dazzled by the light. And instead I see nothing but this dull heaviness and misery —

GINA. Oh, I see.

*She takes the shade off the lamp.*

GREGERS. You don't want to understand me, Mrs Ekdal. Ah, well. I suppose you need a bit more time. But you, Hjalmar, you? Surely you must have gained a higher understanding now that the crisis is over?

HJALMAR. Yes, of course I have. That is — in a kind of way.

GREGERS. For there is nothing in the world that can compare with the joy of forgiving someone who has sinned and raising her to one's heart in love.

HJALMAR. Do you think that a man can so easily digest the bitter draught that I have just drained?

GREGERS. Not an ordinary man, perhaps. But a man like you—

HJALMAR. Oh yes, I know, I know. But you mustn't rush me, Gregers. It takes time, you see.

GREGERS. There's a lot of the wild duck in you, Hjalmar.

RELLING *has entered through the front door.*

RELLING. So the wild duck's in the air again?

HJALMAR. Yes. Mr Werle's winged victim.

RELLING. Mr Werle? Are you talking about him?

HJALMAR. About him and — the rest of us.

RELLING (*aside, to GREGERS*). You b'ooly fool, why don't you go to Hell?

HJALMAR. What did you say?

RELLING. I was expressing my heartfelt desire to see this quack doctor back wher' he belongs. If he stays here, he's quite capable of messing up both your lives.

GREGERS. You needn't fear for these two, Dr Relling. I shan't speak about Hjalmar. We both know him. But in her too, deep in her heart, there is something of honesty and truthfulness.

GINA (*near to tears*). Then you ought to have let me stay as I was.

RELLING. Would it be impertinent to ask exactly what it is you're trying to do in this house?

GREGERS. I want to lay the foundations of a true marriage.

RELLING. Then you don't think their marriage is good enough as it stands?

GREGERS. It's probably as good a marriage as most others, I'm afraid. But it is not yet a true marriage.

HJALMAR. You've never had much faith in ideals, Dr Relling.

RELLING. Rubbish, my boy! May I ask, Mr Werle — how many true marriages have you seen in your life? Just roughly.

GREGERS. I hardly think I've seen a single one.

RELLING. Neither have I.

GREGERS. But I've seen so many, many marriages of the opposite kind. And I've had the opportunity to study one

at sufficiently close quarters to realize how it can demoralize two human beings.

HJALMAR. The whole moral foundation of a man's life can crumble under his feet. That's the terrible thing.

RELLING. Yes, well, I've never been what you'd call married, so I wouldn't presume to judge. But I do know this, that children are as much a part of any marriage as their parents. So you leave that child alone!

HJALMAR. Ah! Hedvig! My poor Hedvig!

RELLING. Yes, I'll thank you to keep Hedvig out of this. You two are adults; muck about with your own lives, if you enjoy it. But I'm warning you, be gentle with Hedvig, or you may do her irreparable harm.

HJALMAR. Harm?

RELLING. Yes, or she may come to do herself harm - and perhaps others too.

GINA. What would you know about that, Relling?

HJALMAR. There isn't any immediate danger to her eyes, is there?

RELLING. This has nothing to do with her eyes. Hedvig's at a difficult age just now. She's capable of getting up to anything.

GINA. Yes, that's true - I've noticed it already. She's started fooling around with the kitchen stove. She calls it playing with fire. I'm often afraid she'll burn down the house.

RELLING. There you are. You see. I thought as much.

GREGERS (*to RELLING*). But how would you explain that kind of behaviour?

RELLING (*quietly*). My boy. Her voice is breaking.

HJALMAR. As long as the child has me— As long as my head is above the ground—

*There is a loud knock on the door.*

GINA. Quiet, Hjalmar. There's someone on the landing. (*Calls.*) Come in.

MRS SOERBY enters, *in an overcoat*.

MRS SOERBY. Good evening.

GINA (*goes to greet her*). Berta, is it you?

MRS SOERBY. Yes, it's me. But perhaps I've come at an inconvenient moment?

HJALMAR. Of course not. Any messenger from that home is always—

MRS SOERBY (*to GINA*). To be honest, I hoped I might find you alone at this hour of the evening, so I looked in to have a chat and to say goodbye.

GINA. Oh? Are you going away?

MRS SOERBY. Yes. Tomorrow morning. Up to Hoydal. Mr Werle left this afternoon. (*Casually, to GREGERS.*) He asked to be remembered to you.

GINA. Well, fancy that!

HJALMAR. So Mr Werle has gone away. And you're going after him?

MRS SOERBY. Yes. What have you got to say about that, Ekdal?

HJALMAR. I say: take care!

GREGERS. I'd better explain. My father is marrying Mrs Soerby.

HJALMAR. Going to marry her?

GINA. Berta! So it's happened at last!

RELLING (*with a slight tremor in his voice*). This isn't true, surely?

MRS SOERBY. Yes, dear Relling, it's perfectly true.

RELLING. You want to get married again?

MRS SOERBY. Yes. I've decided I do. Mr Werle has obtained a special licence, and we're going to get married quite quietly up at Hoydal.

GREGERS. Well, in that case nothing remains for me but to wish you happiness, as a dutiful stepson.

MRS SOERBY. Thank you; if you really mean it. I certainly hope it will bring happiness both to Mr Werle and to me.

RELLING. Oh, I'm sure n will. Mr Werle never gets drunk — as far as I know — and I don't think he's in the habit of beating up his wives, as the late lamented horse-doctor used to.

MRS SOERBY. Oh, let poor Soerby rest in peace. He had his good points.

RELLING. But Mr Werle, we gather, has better ones.

MRS SOERBY. At least he hasn't wasted all that was best in him. Men who do that must accept the consequences.

RELLING. I'm going out with Molvik tonight.

MRS SOERBY. Don't do that, Relling. Please. For my sake.

RELLING. What else do you suggest? (*To HJALMAR.*) Care to join us?

GINA. No, thank you. Hjalmar doesn't go on that kind of spree.

HJALMAR (*aside, irritated*). Oh, be quiet.

RELLING. Goodbye, Mrs - Werle.

*He goes out through the front door.*

GREGERS (*to MRS SOERBY*). It seems that you and Dr Relling know each other pretty well.

MRS SOERBY. Yes, we've known each other for many years. At one time it even seemed as though our friendship might lead to something more permanent.

GREGERS. Lucky for you it didn't.

MRS SOERBY. I know. But I've always been wary of acting on impulse. A woman can't just throw herself away, can she?

GREGERS. Aren't you afraid I might tell my father about this old friendship?

MRS SOERBY. You don't imagine I haven't told him myself?

GREGERS. Oh?

MRS SOERBY. Anything anyone could truthfully say about me I have already told him. It was the first thing I did when I gathered his intentions.

GREGERS. In that case you've been uncommonly frank.

MRS SOERBY. I've always been frank. It's by far the best policy for a woman.

HJALMAR. What do you say to that, Gina?

GINA. Oh, we women are so different. We can't all be like Berta.

MRS SOERBY. Well, Gina, I really believe I did the only sensible thing. Mr Werle hasn't hidden anything from me, either. And perhaps that's what binds us so closely. Now he can talk to me as freely as a child. He's never been able to do that with anyone before. Fancy a strong and vigorous man like him having to spend all his youth and the best

years of his life listening to sermons — very often occasioned by quite imaginary offences, from what I've heard.

GINA. Yes, that's true enough.

GREGERS. If you ladies are going to discuss that subject, I had better go. . . .

MRS SOERBY. Don't bother. I've had my say. I just wanted you to know I haven't lied to him or kept anything from him. I dare say you think I've done very well for myself. Well, perhaps I have. But I don't think I'm taking more than I shall be able to give him. I shall never fail him. I shall serve him and look after him better than anyone, now that he's growing helpless.

HJALMAR. He? Growing helpless?

GREGERS (*to MRS SOERBY*). Look, I'd rather we didn't discuss that.

MRS SOERBY. It's no use trying to hide it any longer, though I know he wants to. He's going blind.

HJALMAR (*starts*). Going blind? That's strange. Is he going blind too?

GINA. It happens to lots of people.

MRS SOERBY. It's not hard to imagine what that must mean to a man like him. Well, I shall try to make my eyes serve for the two of us as best I can. But I mustn't stay any longer. I've so much to do just now. Oh, what I wanted to tell you, Ekdal, was that if there's anything Mr Werle can ever do for you, just go and speak to Graaberg.

GREGERS. I hardly think Hjalmar Ekdal will want to accept that offer.

MRS SOERBY. Oh? I haven't noticed in the past that he—

GINA. Yes, Beita. Hjalmar doesn't need to take anything from Mr Werle any longer.

HJALMAR (*slowly and emphatically*). Will you present my compliments to your future husband and tell him that I intend at the earliest opportunity to visit Mr Graaberg—

GREGERS. Hjalmar!

HJALMAR. I repeat, to visit Mr Graaberg and demand from him an account of the sum I owe his employer. I shall repay this debt of honour—(*Laughs.*)—debt of honour! But enough

of that. I shall repay it to the last penny, with five per cent interest.

GINA. But my dear Hjalmar, we haven't the money to do that.  
HJALMAR. Will you please tell your fiancé that I am working indefatigably at my invention. Will you tell him that my spirit is sustained throughout this exhausting struggle by the desire to be rid of the embarrassing burden of this debt. That is why I have become an inventor. The entire profits shall be used to free me from the money of which your prospective husband has seen fit to disgorge himself.

MRS SOERBY. What's been going on in this house?

HJALMAR. Never mind.

MRS SOERBY. Well, goodbye. There was something else I wanted to talk to you about, Gina: but it'll have to wait till another time. Goodbye.

HJALMAR and GREGERS bow silently. GINA accompanies MRS SOERBY to the door.

HJALMAR. Not beyond the threshold, Gina.

MRS SOERBY goes. GINA closes the door behind her.

HJALMAR. There, Gregers. Thank God I've managed to get that debt off my conscience.

GREGERS. Well, you will soon, anyway.

HJALMAR. I think I can claim I behaved correctly.

GREGERS. You behaved exactly as I always knew you would.

HJALMAR. A time comes when a man can no longer ignore the command of his ideals. As the family breadwinner I am continually tormented by this command. I tell you, Gregers, it isn't easy for a man of small means to repay an old debt on which, as one might say, there has settled the dust of oblivion. But there's no other way. I must do what is right.

GREGERS (*puts his hand on HJALMAR's shoulders*). My dear Hjalmar. Aren't you glad I came?

HJALMAR. Yes.

GREGERS. Aren't you glad to see yourself as you really are?

HJALMAR (*a little impatiently*). Of course I'm glad. But there's one thing which troubles my sense of justice. Well, but I don't know whether I should speak so bluntly about your father.

GREGERS. Say what you like. I don't mind.

HJALMAR. Well, then — it offends me to think that it is he, and not I, who is going to make a true marriage.

GREGERS. What are you saying!

HJALMAR. But it's true. Your father and Mrs Soerby are entering upon a marriage founded on absolute trust, with complete frankness on both sides. They are keeping nothing from each other. They have confessed their sins, if I may so phrase it, and have forgiven each other.

GREGERS. Well, what of it?

HJALMAR. But that's the whole point. You said yourself that it's only by overcoming all that that you can found a true marriage.

GREGERS. But that's quite different, Hjalmar. You surely don't compare yourself or her with these two — ? Well, you know what I mean.

HJALMAR. I can't get away from the fact that there's something here which wounds and offends my sense of justice. Well, it looks as though there's no just power ruling this world.

GINA. Oh, Hjalmar, really! You mustn't speak like that!

GREGERS. Hm — let's not get on to that subject

HJALMAR. But on the other hand I seem to see the finger of fate at work restoring the balance. He is going blind.

GINA. Oh, we don't know for sure about that.

HJALMAR. Can we doubt it? At least, we ought not to; for there lie justice and retribution. He had blinded a loyal and trusting friend —

GREGERS. I'm afraid he has blinded many.

HJALMAR. And now comes the incalculable, the unfathomable, and demands his own eyes.

GINA. Oh, how can you say such a horrible thing? You make me feel quite frightened.

HJALMAR. It is useful to face up to the darker aspects of existence now and then.

HEDVIG, *in her hat and coat, enters happy and breathless through the front door.*

GINA. Are you back already?

HEDVIG. Yes, I didn't want to walk any more. And a good thing too, for I met someone coming out of the front door.

HJALMAR. That Mrs Soerby, I suppose.

HEDVIG. Yes.

HJALMAR (*walking up and down*). I hope you have seen her for the last time.

*Silence. HEDVIG looks timidly from one to the other as though to find out what is the matter.*

HEDVIG (*goes nearer him, wooing*). Father.

HJALMAR. Well, what is it, Hedvig?

HEDVIG. Mrs Soerby brought something for me.

HJALMAR (*stops*). For you?

HEDVIG. Yes. Something for tomorrow.

GINA. Berta always brings something for your birthday.

HJALMAR. What is it?

HEDVIG. No, you mustn't know yet. Mother's going to bring it to me in bed tomorrow morning.

HJALMAR. Oh, this conspiracy to keep me outside of everything!

HEDVIG (*quickly*). No, of course you can see it. It's a big letter.  
*She takes the letter from her coat pocket.*

HJALMAR. A letter too?

HEDVIG. Only a letter. The present'll come later, I suppose. But fancy — a letter! I've never had a letter before. And there's 'Miss' written on the outside! (*Reads.*) 'Miss Hedvig Ekdal.' That's me!

HJALMAR. Let me see that letter.

HEDVIG (*holds it out to him*). Here — look!

HJALMAR. This is Mr Werle's writing.

GINA. Are you sure, Hjalmar?

HJALMAR. Look for yourself.

GINA. How should I know?

HJALMAR. Hedvig, may I open this letter and read it?

HEDVIG. Yes, certainly, if you want to.

GINA. No, Hjalmar, not tonight. It's for tomorrow.

HEDVIG (*quietly*). Oh, do let him read it, please! It's sure to be something nice, and then father'll be happy, and it'll be nice here again.

HJALMAR. I may open it, then?

HEDVIG. Yes, do, father. It'll be fun to know what's in it.

HJALMAR. Right. (*Opens the letter, takes out a sheet of paper, reads it and looks bewildered.*) What on earth—?

GINA. What does it say?

HEDVIG. Oh, yes, father! Do tell us!

HJALMAR. Be quiet! (*Reads it through again. Then, pale but controlled, he says.*) It's a deed of gift, Hedvig.

HEDVIG. I say! What do I get?

HJALMAR. See for yourself.

HEDVIG goes over to the lamp and reads the letter under it.  
HJALMAR (*softly, clenching his fists*). The eyes! The eyes! And this letter!

HEDVIG (*looks up from her reading*). But I think grandfather ought to have it.

HJALMAR (*takes the letter from her*). Gina, can you make any sense of this?

GINA. You know I don't understand anything. Tell me what it's about.

HJALMAR. Mr Werle writes to Hedvig that her old grandfather need no longer trouble to copy letters but that he can henceforth draw from the office the sum of five pounds per month—

GINA. Really?

HEDVIG. Five pounds, mother! That's what it says!

GINA. Well, that'll be nice for grandfather.

HJALMAR. Five pounds, for as long as he needs it. That means, of course, for as long as he lives.

GINA. Well, at least he's provided for then, poor old man.

HJALMAR. But there's something c' c'. You didn't read this part, Hedvig. Afterwards, this money is to be paid to you.

HEDVIG. To me? All of it?

HJALMAR. You are assured of this sum for the rest of your life, he writes. Did you hear that, Gina?

GINA. Yes, I heard.

HEDVIG. Imagine all the money I'm going to have! (*Shakes him.*) Oh, father, father, aren't you happy—?

HJALMAR (*avoids her*). Happy! (*Walks about.*) Oh, what vistas, what perspectives begin to unroll before my eyes! It's Hedvig! She's the one he remembers so generously!

GINA. Yes – well, it's Hedvig's birthday.

HEDVIG. But you shall have it all, father! I want to give all the money to you and mother!

HJALMAR. Yes, to mother! There we have it!

GREGERS. Hjalmar, this is a trap which has been laid for you.

HJALMAR. You think this is another trap?

GREGERS. When he was here this morning, he said to me: 'Hjalmar Ekdal is not the man you think he is.'

HJALMAR. Not the man—!

GREGERS. 'You'll see,' he said.

HJALMAR. Meaning that I would let myself be fobbed off with money!

HEDVIG. Mother, what are they talking about?

GINA. Go in there and take your coat off.

HEDVIG goes out through the kitchen door, almost in tears.  
GREGERS. Well, Hjalmar, now we shall see which of us is right. He or I.

HJALMAR (*slowly tears the letter in two and puts the pieces on the table*). There is my reply.

GREGERS. I knew it would be.

HJALMAR (*goes over to GINA who is standing by the stove and says in a low voice*). And now let's have the truth. If it was all over between you and him when you – began to grow fond of me, as you put it – why did he make it possible for us to get married?

GINA. I suppose he thought he could have a key.

HJALMAR. Was that all? Wasn't he afraid of a certain possibility?

GINA. I don't know what you mean.

HJALMAR. I want to know if – your child has the right to live beneath my roof.

GINA (*draws herself up; her eyes flash*). You ask me that?

HJALMAR. Answer me! Is Hedvig mine or – ? Well?

GINA (*looks at him in cold defiance*). I don't know.

HJALMAR (*trembles slightly*). You don't know!

GINA. How could I? I — couldn't tell—.

HJALMAR (*quietly, turning away from her*). Then I have no further business in this house.

GREGERS. Consider, Hjalmar!

HJALMAR (*puts on his overcoat*). There's nothing for a man like me to consider.

GREGERS. You're wrong. There's a great deal to consider. You three must stay together if you are to win the forgiveness that comes with self-sacrifice.

HJALMAR. I don't want to win it! Never, never! My hat! (*Takes his hat*.) My home has crashed in ruins about me! (*Bursts into tears*.) Gregers. I have no child!

HEDVIG (*who has opened the kitchen door*). What are you saying! (*Runs over to him*.) Daddy, daddy!

GINA. There, you see!

HJALMAR. Don't come near me, Hedvig! Go -- go far away! I can't bear to look at you! Ah - those eyes! Goodbye!

*He goes towards the door.*

HEDVIG (*clings tightly to him, and screams*). No! No! Don't leave me!

GINA (*cries*). Look at the child, Hjalmar! Look at the child!

HJALMAR. I won't! I can't! I must get away! Away from all this!

*He tears himself free from HEDVIG and goes out through the front door.*

HEDVIG (*with despair in her eyes*). He's leaving us, mother! He's leaving us! He'll never come back again!

GINA. Don't cry, Hedvig. Daddy will come back.

HEDVIG (*throws herself sobbing on the sofa*). No, no. He'll never come back to us again.

GREGERS. Will you believe that I meant it all for your good, Mrs Ekdal?

GINA. Yes, I believe it. But God forgive you.

HEDVIG (*lying on the sofa*). Oh, I shall die, I shall die! What have I done to him? Mother, you must make him come back home!

GINA. Yes, yes, yes, all right. Calm yourself, and I'll go out and look for him. (*Puts on her overcoat*.) Perhaps he's just

gone down to Relling. But you mustn't lie there and cry. Promise me?

HEDVIG (*sobbing convulsively*). Yes, I'll stop. When father comes back.

GREGERS (*to GINA, as she is about to go*). Wouldn't it be better to let him fight his bitter battle to the end?

GINA. Oh, that'll have to wait. Now we must think of the child.

*She goes out through the front door.*

HEDVIG (*sits and dries her tears*). I want to know what all this means. Why won't father look at me any more?

GREGERS. You mustn't ask that till you're grown up.

HEDVIG (*catches her breath*). But I can't go on being unhappy like this all the time till I'm grown up. I know what it is. I'm not really daddy's child.

GREGERS (*uneasily*). How on earth could that be?

HEDVIG. Muminy might have found me. And perhaps father's got to know about it. I've read of things like that.

GREGERS. Well, but even if it were true—

HEDVIG. Yes, I think he should love me just the same. Or even more. After all, we got the wild duck sent to us as a present, but I love it very much.

GREGERS (*changing the conversation*). Yes, that's true. Let's talk for a moment about the wild duck, Hedvig.

HEDVIG. The poor wild duck. He can't bear to look at her any longer, either. Do you know, he wants to wring her neck!

GREGERS. Oh, I'm sure he won't do that.

HEDVIG. No, but he said it. And I think it was such a horrid thing for father to say. I say a prayer for the wild duck every evening. I pray that she may be delivered from death and from all evil.

GREGERS (*looks at her*). Do you always say your prayers at night?

HEDVIG. Oh, yes.

GREGERS. Who taught you to do that?

HEDVIG. I taught myself. Once when father was very ill, and had leeches on his neck. He said death was staring him in the face.

GREGERS. Yes?

HEDVIG. So I said a prayer for him after I'd gone to bed. And since then I've kept it up.

GREGERS. And now you pray for the wild duck too?

HEDVIG. I thought I'd better include her, because she was so ill when she first came to us.

GREGERS. Do you say your prayers in the morning, too?

HEDVIG. Oh, no. Of course not.

GREGERS. Well, why not in the morning?

HEDVIG. In the morning it's light, and then there's nothing to be afraid of any more.

GREGERS. And your father wanted to wring the neck of the wild duck, which you love so much?

HEDVIG. No, he said he ought to, but he'd spare her for my sake. That was kind of him, wasn't it?

GREGERS (*a little closer*). Yes, but what if you now gave up the wild duck for his sake?

HEDVIG (*rises*). The wild duck?

GREGERS. Yes. Suppose you sacrificed for him the most precious of your possessions — the thing you love most dearly?

HEDVIG. Do you think that would help?

GREGERS. Try it, Hedvig.

HEDVIG (*quietly, her eyes aglow*). Yes, I will try it.

GREGERS. Do you think you have the strength to do it?

HEDVIG. I'll ask grandfather to shoot the wild duck for me.

GREGERS. Yes, do that. But not a word to your mother about this!

HEDVIG. Why not?

GREGERS. She doesn't understand ...

HEDVIG. The wild duck! I'll do it tomorrow morning.

*GINA comes in through the front door.*

HEDVIG (*goes to meet her*). Did you find him, mother?

GINA. No. But I heard he'd called in to see Relling and they'd gone off together.

GREGERS. Are you sure?

GINA. Yes, the caretaker told me. Movik went with them too, she said.

GREGERS. Now, when he needs to wrestle with his soul alone!  
GINA (*takes off her coat*). Well, men are difficult creatures.

God knows where Relling's dragged him off to. I ran over  
to Mrs Eriksen's, but they weren't there.

HEDVIG (*trying not to cry*). Oh, suppose he never comes back!

GREGERS. He'll come back. I shall tell him some news to-  
morrow, and then you'll see how quickly he will come.

Don't worry, Hedvig. You can sleep in peace. Good night.

*He goes out through the front door.*

HEDVIG (*throws her arms, sobbing, round GINA's neck*). Mummy,  
mummy!

GINA (*pats her on the back and sighs*). Oh, yes, Relling was  
right. This is what happens when crazy people go round  
preaching about the commands of the ideal!

## Act Five

HJALMAR EKDAL's studio. *A cold, grey morning light. Wet snow lies on the large panes of glass in the roof.* GINA, wearing an apron, enters from the kitchen with a brush and duster and goes towards the parlour door. At the same moment HEDVIG runs in from the passage.

GINA (*stops*). Well?

HEDVIG. Yes, mother, I think he's down with Relling—

GINA. There you are!

HEDVIG. The caretaker said Relling had two people with him when he came back last night.

GINA. I thought as much.

HEDVIG. But that's no good, if he won't come up and see us.

GINA. You leave it to me. I'll go down and have a word with m.

OLD EKDAL, *in a dressing-gown and slippers and with a lighted pipe, appears in the doorway of his room.*

EKDAL. Hjalmar. I—! Isn't Hjalmar at home?

GINA. No, he seems to have gone out.

EKDAL. What, already? And in this blizzard? Oh, well. Let him. I can go for a walk by myself.

*He pushes aside the door of the loft. HEDVIG helps him. He goes in, and she closes the door behind him.*

HEDVIG (*softly*). Poor grandfather! What will he say when he hears father's leaving us?

GINA. Don't be silly, grandfather mustn't be told about that. Thank God he wasn't here yesterday when all the hullabaloo was going on.

HEDVIG. Yes, but—

*GREGERS enters through the front door.*

GREGERS. Well? Have you found where he is?

GINA. They say he's downstairs with Relling.

GREGERS. With Relling! Has he really been out with those people?

GINA. So it seems.

GREGERS. But he needed so much to be alone, and to collect his thoughts—

GINA. Yes, you may well say that.

RELLING enters from the passage.

HEDVIG (goes towards him). Is father with you?

GINA (simultaneously). Is he there?

RELLING. He certainly is.

HEDVIG. And you didn't tell us!

RELLING. Yes, I'm a beast. But I had to put the other beast to bed first — I refer of course to our daemonic friend — and then I fell asleep—

GINA. What has Hjalmar got to say today?

RELLING. Nothing.

HEDVIG. Doesn't he say anything?

RELLING. Not a damn thing.

GREGERS. No, no. I can understand that so well.

GINA. But what's he doing, then?

RELLING. He's on the sofa, snoring.

GINA. Is he? Yes, Hjalmar's a terrible snorer.

HEDVIG. You mean he's asleep?

RELLING. It certainly sounds like it.

GREGERS. It's quite understandable. After the spiritual conflict that's been rending him—

GINA. And he's not used to wandering around outside at night.

HEDVIG. Perhaps it's a good thing he's getting some sleep, mother.

GINA. Yes, I was just thinking that. We'd better not wake him up too soon. Thanks, Relling. I must clean the place up a bit, and then I'll— Come and give me a hand, Hedvig.

GINA and HEDVIG go into the parlour.

GREGERS (turns to RELLING). Can you explain this spiritual turmoil in Hjalmar Ekdal?

RELLING. Can't say I've noticed any spiritual turmoil in him.

GREGERS. What! At such a crisis, when his whole life has been

given a new moral foundation—! How do you suppose a man of Hjalmar's personality—?

RELLING. Personality — *him*? If he ever had any tendency to the kind of abnormalities you call personality, they were nipped out of him, root and branch, before his voice broke. You take my word for it.

GREGERS. That's surprising, considering the love and care with which he was brought up.

RELLING. By those two twisted, hysterical maiden aunts, you mean?

GREGERS. At least they were idealists — but I suppose you'll laugh at me again for saying that.

RELLING. No, I'm not in the mood for that. I know all about it. I've had to endure vomits of rhetoric about his 'two spiritual mothers'. But I don't think he's got much to be grateful to them for. His main tragedy is that all his life he's been regarded by everyone around him as a genius —

GREGERS. Well, isn't he? Deep down inside?

RELLING. I've never noticed any evidence of it. Oh, his father thought so, but — well, he's been a bloody fool all his life.

GREGERS. No, he has kept the innocence of a ch'ld all his life. That's something you can't understand.

RELLING. All right, have it your way. But when dear little Hjalmar somehow got to University, he was at once hailed as the great white hope there too. Well, he was handsome of course — that helps — you know, peaches and cream, the shopgirl's dream — and with his romantic temperament and throbbing voice and talent for declaiming other people's poetry and ideas —

GREGERS (*indignantly*). Are you talking about Hjalmar Ekdal?

RELLING. Yes. With your permission, that's what this idol you grovel to really looks like when you take him apart.

GREGERS. Well, I don't think I'm completely blind.

RELLING. You're not far off. You're a sick man too, you know.

GREGERS. Yes, you're right there.

RELLING. Oh, yes. Yours is a complicated case. To begin with, you've this tiresome rash of righteousness; and what's

worse, you live in a perpetual delirium of hero-worship. You've always got to have something outside yourself that you can idolize.

GREGERS. That's true. I have to seek it outside myself.

RELLING. It's pathetic the way you make a fool of yourself over these supermen you imagine you see all around you. This is just another of those workmen's cottages where you started hawking your ideals. We're all insolvent here.

GREGERS. If that's your opinion of Hjalmar Ekdal, how can you spend so much time with him?

RELLING. I'm meant to be a doctor of sorts, God forgive me. I've got to do something for these wretched cripples I share a roof with.

GREGERS. I see. So Hjalmar Ekdal is sick too?

RELLING. Well, who isn't?

GREGERS. And what medicine are you giving him?

RELLING. My usual one. I feed the life-lie in him.

GREGERS. Life-lie did you say?

RELLING. Yes, that's right. The universal stimulant.

GREGERS. And what is the life-lie with which Hjalmar Ekdal is infected, if I may ask?

RELLING. You may not. I don't betray professional secrets to quacks. I wouldn't put it past you to make an even worse mess of him. But my remedy's infallible. I've used it on Molvik for years. I've made him daemonic. That's the serum I've injected into his skull.

GREGERS. Isn't he daemonic, then?

RELLING. What the hell does it mean, daemonic? It's just a bit of claptrap I thought up to keep him alive. If I hadn't done it the poor swine would have succumbed to self-contempt and despair years ago. And what about the old lieutenant? Well, he found the cure himself.

GREGERS. Lieutenant Ekdal? How do you mean?

RELLING. What about that? The great bear-hunter going into that musty old loft to chase rabbits? There isn't a happier sportsman in the world than that old man when they let him potter in there among all that junk. Those four or five withered Christmas trees smell the same to him as the great

forests of Hoydal; the chickens are the wild game in the pine-top; and the rabbits that flop across the floor are bears to challenge the strength and skill of the mighty hunter.

GREGERS. Poor Lieutenant Ekdäl! Yes, he's had to abandon his youthful ideals.

RELLING. While I remember it, Mr Werle junior, forget that foreign word 'ideals'. Why not use that good old Norwegian word: 'lies'?

GREGERS. Do you suggest the two are related?

RELLING. About as closely as typhus and putrid fever.

GREGERS. Dr Relling, I will not give up until I have rescued Hjalmar Ekdal from your clutches.

RELLING. So much the worse for him. Deprive the average human being of his life-lie, and you rob him of his happiness. (*To HEDVIG, as she enters from the parlour.*) Well, little wild-duck-mother, I'm off downstairs to see if your father's still pondering his great invention on my sofa.

*He goes out through the front door.*

GREGERS (*goes closer to HEDVIG*). I can see it, Hedvig. You haven't done it.

HEDVIG. What? Oh, that thing about the wild duck. No.

GREGERS. Your strength of purpose failed yo: when the moment for action came, I suppose.

HEDVIG. No, it wasn't that. It was just that when I woke this morning and remembered what we'd been talking about, I thought it all seemed so strange.

GREGERS. Strange?

HEDVIG. I don't know Yesterday evening, when you first mentioned it, I thought there was something so beautiful in the idea; but when I'd slept on it and thought about it again, it didn't seem so good.

GREGERS. Oh, no. Of course you can't have grown up in this house without some rot setting in.

HEDVIG. I don't care about that. If only father would come back, I'd—

GREGERS. Oh, if only your eyes could be opened to what really matters in life! If only you had the courage to make your sacrifice truly and joyfully, you'd sec — he'd come

back to you! But I still believe in you, Hedvig. I believe in you.

*He goes out through the front door. HEDVIG walks around for a little; then she is about to go into the kitchen when there is a knock on the door of the loft. HEDVIG goes over and opens it slightly. OLD EKDAL comes out. She closes the door again.*

EKDAL. Hm! It's not much fun having to take my exercise alone.

HEDVIG. Didn't you feel like hunting today, grandfather?

EKDAL. It's bad weather for hunting today. Dark. You can hardly see your hand in front of your face.

HEDVIG. Don't you ever feel you'd like to shoot something else besides rabbits?

EKDAL. What's wrong with rabbits? Aren't they good enough?

HEDVIG. Yes, but what about - well, the wild duck?

EKDAL (*laughs*). Oh, so you're afraid I'll shoot your wild duck, are you? Don't worry, my child. I'd never do that.

HEDVIG. No, of course, you couldn't. I've heard it's very difficult to shoot wild ducks.

EKDAL. Couldn't? What do you mean? Of course I could.

HEDVIG. How would you go about it, 'grandfather'? I don't mean with my wild duck, but with other ones?

EKDAL. I'd shoot them under the breast, Hedvig. That's the safest place. And you've got to shoot against the feathers, mind, not with them.

HEDVIG. Do they die then, grandfather?

EKDAL. You bet they die, if you shoot them properly. Well, I must go in and - hm - clean myself up. You understand - hm?

*He goes into his room. HEDVIG waits a few moments, glances towards the door of the parlour, goes over to the bookcase, reaches up on tiptoe, takes down the double-barrelled pistol from the shelf and looks at it. GINA enters from the parlour with her duster and brush. HEDVIG quickly puts down the pistol, unnoticed.*

GINA. Don't stand there messing about with your father's things, Hedvig.

HEDVIG (*leaves the bookcase*). I only wanted to tidy up a little.  
 GINA. Go into the kitchen and see if the coffee's still hot. I'll take the tray when I go down.

HEDVIG goes out. GINA begins to sweep and clean the studio. After a few moments, the front door is cautiously opened and HJALMAR looks in. He is wearing his overcoat but is hatless and unwashed. His hair is tousled and his eyes are dull and tired.

GINA (*stands with the brush in her hand and looks at him*). Oh. Hullo, Hjalmar — you've come.

HJALMAR (*walks in and answers in a flat voice*). I've come — but only to go at once.

GINA. Yes, yes, of course. But my goodness, look at you!

HJALMAR. At me?

GINA. And your nice winter coat! Well, that's done for.

HEDVIG (*in the kitchen doorway*). Mother, hadn't I better — ?

*Sees HJALMAR, gives a cry of joy and runs towards him.*

Oh, father, father!

HJALMAR (*turns away with a gesture of rejection*). Get away, get away, get away! (*To GINA.*) Get her away from me!

GINA (*softly*). Go into the parlour, Hedvig.

HEDVIG goes silently out.

HJALMAR (*severishly pulls out the drawer of the table*). I must take my books with me. Where are my books?

GINA. What books?

HJALMAR. My scientific books, of course. The technical magazines I need for my invention.

GINA (*looks in the bookcase*). Are these the ones, without any covers?

HJALMAR. Of course they are.

GINA (*puts a heap of magazines on the table*). Shall I get Hedvig to cut the pages for you?

HJALMAR. I don't want them cut.

*Short silence.*

GINA. So you're really leaving us, Hjalmar?

HJALMAR (*rummaging among the books*). Have I any choice?

GINA. No, no.

HJALMAR (*vehemently*). I can't go on being pierced to the heart every hour of the day!

GINA. May God forgive you for thinking so vilely of me!

HJALMAR. Give me proof—!

GINA. I think you're the one who needs to do the proving.

HJALMAR. With your past! There are certain things a man has a right to demand — one might be tempted to call them demands of the ideal—

GINA. What about grandfather? What's going to become of him, poor old man?

HJALMAR. I know my duty. That helpless old man leaves with me. I shall go into town and make arrangements. Hm— (*Unwillingly.*) Has anyone seen my hat on the stairs?

GINA. No. Have you lost your hat?

HJALMAR. I had it on when I came back last night. Naturally. There can be no doubt about that. But I haven't been able to find it today.

GINA. For mercy's sake, where on earth did you get to with those two scallywags?

HJALMAR. Don't bother me with trivialities. Do you suppose I'm in a mood to recall details?

GINA. Well, I only hope you haven't caught cold, Hjalmar.  
*She goes out into the kitchen.*

HJALMAR (*muttering to himself, half-audibly and furiously as he empties the drawer beneath the table*). You're a scoundrel, Relling! A cad, that's what you are! Oh, you vile seducer! I wish I could hire someone to stick a knife in your back!

*He puts some old letters on one side, finds the letter he tore up yesterday, picks it up and looks at the pieces, then puts it quickly down again as GINA returns.*

GINA (*puts a tray with coffee, etc., on the table*). I've brought you a cup of something warm, in case you feel inclined. And some bread and butter and a bit of cold fish.

HJALMAR (*glances at the tray*). Cold fish? Under this roof? Never! I've had no solid food for nearly twenty-four hours, but no matter. My notes! The first chapter of my memoirs! Where's my diary? Where are all my important papers?

(*Opens the parlour door, but shrinks back.*) There she is again!

GINA. But for heaven's sake, the child's got to be somewhere.  
HJALMAR. Come out.

*He moves aside to make way for her. HEDVIG enters, frightened.*

HJALMAR (*with his hand on the door-handle, says to GINA*). During my last minutes in what was my home, I wish to be spared the presence of outsiders.

*He goes into the parlour.*

HEDVIG (*runs to her mother and asks softly, trembling*). Does he mean me?

GINA. Stay in the kitchen, Hedvig. No, you'd better go to your room. (*To HJALMAR, as she goes in to him.*) Stop rummaging in those drawers. I know where everything is.

HEDVIG (*stands motionless for a moment, anguished and bewildered, biting her lips to keep back her tears. Then she clenches her fists convulsively and says quietly*). The wild duck!

*She steals over and takes the pistol from the shelf, opens the loft door a few inches, creeps in and pulls it shut behind her.*

*In the parlour offstage, HJALMAR and GINA begin to argue.*

HJALMAR (*comes out with some notebooks and old loose papers, which he puts down on the table*). Oh, that old bag's no use. There are hundreds of things I've got to lug away.

GINA (*comes after him with the bag*). Well, just take a shirt and a pair of knickers with you. You can come back for the rest later.

HJALMAR. Phew! It's so exhausting, all this packing!

*He tears off his overcoat and throws it on the sofa.*

GINA. And now your coffee's getting cold, too.

HJALMAR. Hm. (*Automatically takes a mouthful; then another.*)

GINA (*dusting the backs of the chairs*). The big difficulty'll be to find another big loft like this for the rabbits.

HJALMAR. What! Do you expect me to drag all those rabbits along too?

GINA. Well, you know grandfather can't live without his rabbits.

HJALMAR. Well, he'll have to learn. I'm giving up more important things than rabbits.

GINA (*dusting the bookshelves*). Shall I pack the flute?

HJALMAR. No. No flute for me. Give me the pistol, though.

GINA. Are you going to take the pistol?

HJALMAR. Yes. My loaded pistol.

GINA (*looks for it*). It's gone. He must have taken it with him.

HJALMAR. Is he in the loft?

GINA. Yes, of course he's in the loft.

HJALMAR. Hm. The lonely old man!

*He takes a piece of bread and butter, eats it and empties his cup.*

GINA. If only we hadn't let that room, you could have moved in there.

HJALMAR. What! Live under the same roof as—? Never!  
Never!

GINA. Couldn't you manage in the parlour for a day or two?  
You'd be alone there.

HJALMAR. Within these walls? Never!

GINA. Well, how about downstairs with Relling and Molvik?

HJALMAR. Don't mention their names to me! The mere thought of them makes me lose my appetite. No, I must go out into the wind and snow, wandering from door to door seeking shelter for myself and my old father.

GINA. But you've no hat, Hjalmar. You've lost your hat.

HJALMAR. Scum! Vice-ridden scum, that's what they are! We must find a hat. (*Takes another piece of bread and butter*)

Something must be done. I don't intend to die of exposure.

GINA. What are you looking for?

HJALMAR. Butter.

GINA. Coming up right away. (*She goes out into the kitchen.*)

HJALMAR (*shouts after her*). Oh, it doesn't matter. I can eat dry bread.

GINA (*comes back with a butter-dish*). Here, this is meant to be fresh.

*She pours him another cup of coffee. He sits on the sofa, spreads more butter on his bread, and eats and drinks for a few moments in silence.*

HJALMAR. Would I really not be bothered by anyone if I

stayed a couple of days in that room? Anyone at all?

GINA. No, of course not. Why don't you?

HJALMAR. I can't see any hope of getting all father's things moved out all at once.

GINA. And don't forget you've got to break the news to him about your not wanting to live with us any longer.

HJALMAR (*pushes away his coffee cup*). Yes, there's that too.

I've got to dig up all those complications again. I must think things over. I must give myself breathing-space. I can't cope with so many different burdens in one day.

GINA. No, of course not. Especially with the weather what it is.

HJALMAR (*touches WERLE's letter*). I see that letter's still lying around.

GINA. Yes, I haven't touched it.

HJALMAR. Of course, it's nothing to do with me—

GINA. Well, I certainly don't want to make anything out of it.

HJALMAR. Still, there's no point in letting it get lost. In the confusion of my moving, it might easily—

GINA. I'll see it doesn't.

HJALMAR. Of course, this deed of gift really belongs to father.

It's up to him to decide whether it's to be used or not.

GINA (*sighs*). Yes, poor old father!

HJALMAR. Perhaps for safety's sake — where can I find some glue?

GINA (*goes over to the bookcase*). The pot's here.

HJALMAR. And a brush.

GINA. The brush is here, : o.

*She brings them to him.*

HJALMAR (*takes a pair of scissors*). Just a strip of paper along the back— (*Cuts and glues.*) Far be it from me to deprive other people of what belongs to them. Least of all a destitute old man. Or — any other person. There, now! Let that stand for a few minutes. And when it's dry, take it away. I never want to see the thing again. Never!

*GREGERS WERLE enters from the passage.*

GREGERS (*a little surprised*). Oh! Are you here, Hjalmar?

HJALMAR (*gets up quickly*). I was overcome by fatigue.

GREGERS. I see you've had breakfast, however.

HJALMAR. The body makes its demands too, you know.

GREGERS. Well, what have you decided?

HJALMAR. For a man like me, there is no choice. I'm just getting my most important belongings together. But that takes time, you know.

GINA (*a little impatiently*). Well, shall I make the room ready or shall I pack your bag?

HJALMAR (*gives an annoyed glance at GRETERS*). Pack. And make it ready.

GINA (*takes the bag*). Well, well. I'll put in a shirt and knick – and the other things.

*She goes into the parlour and closes the door behind her.*

GREGERS (*after a short silence*). I'd never envisaged it ending like this. Must you really leave your home?

HJALMAR (*wanders around restlessly*). Well, what do you want me to do? I wasn't cut out to suffer, Gregers. I must have peace and calm and comfort around me.

GREGERS. Well, why not? Try! It seems to me that now you have firm ground to build on. Start afresh! And remember, you have your invention to live for too.

HJALMAR. Oh, don't talk about the invention. That may be further off than you think.

GREGERS. Oh?

HJALMAR. Well, damn it, what is there for me to invent? Other people have invented almost everything already! It's becoming more and more difficult every day—

GREGERS. But you've put so much work into it.

HJALMAR. It was that drunkard Relling who started me off on it.

GREGERS. Relling?

HJALMAR. Yes. It was he who first made me conscious that I had the talent to make some invention that would revolutionize photography.

GREGERS. I see. So it was Relling.

HJALMAR. Oh, it's made me so happy thinking about it! Not so much for the sake of the invention itself, but because Hedvig believed in it – believed in it as passionately and trustingly as only a child can believe in a thing. What I

mean to say is — I was fool enough to delude myself into thinking she believed in it.

GREGERS. Do you seriously believe that Hedvig hasn't been sincere?

HJALMAR. I can believe anything now. Hedvig's the one who stands in my way. Her shadow is going to shut the sunlight out of my life.

GREGERS. Hedvig? Are you talking about Hedvig?

HJALMAR. I loved that child beyond words. I felt so incredibly happy every time I came back to this humble home and she ran to greet me with those sweet eyes peering at me. Oh, what a credulous fool I was! I loved her so, I loved her so. And I dreamed, I deluded myself into believing that she loved me too.

GREGERS. You call that a delusion?

HJALMAR. How can I know? I can't get anything out of Gina — and anyway, she's so totally insensitive to the idealistic aspect of all these complications — But to you, Gregers, I feel impelled to open my heart. There's this dreadful doubt in my mind that perhaps Hedvig has never really and truly loved me.

GREGERS. Perhaps you may be given proof that she does. (*listens.*) What was that? I think I can hear the wild duck crying.

HJALMAR. Yes, that's her quacking. Father's there in the loft.

GREGERS. Is he? (*His eyes shine with joy.*) I tell you, you may perhaps be given proof that your poor, misjudged Hedvig does love you.

HJALMAR. Oh, what proof can she give me? I couldn't believe anything from those lips.

GREGERS. Hedvig is incapable of deceit.

HJALMAR. Oh, Gregers, that's just what I can't be sure of. Who knows what Gina and that Mrs Soerby may not have said when they were gossiping up here? And that child keeps her ears open. That deed of gift may not have come as such a surprise to her as she made out. I thought I noticed something odd in her manner.

GREGERS. What on earth has come over you?

HJALMAR. I've had my eyes opened. Just you wait — you'll see. That deed of gift is only the beginning. Mrs Soerby's always had a soft spot for Hedvig, and now she's in a position to do anything she likes for the child. They can take her from me any moment they want.

GREGERS. Hedvig will never leave you.

HJALMAR. I wouldn't be too sure of that. If they stand there beckoning to her with their hands full of—! And I, who loved her so much, so much! I couldn't imagine any greater happiness than to take her gently by the hand and lead her as a man leads a child who is afraid of the dark through a large, empty room. I can see it now so clearly — the poor photographer in his attic has never really meant very much to her. She was just cunning enough to keep on good terms with him until the time was ripe.

GREGERS. Oh, Hjalmar, you don't believe that.

HJALMAR. The tragedy is that I don't know what to believe — and that I never will know. Oh, you're too much of an idealist, my dear Gregers. If they came to her with their hands full of gold and cried to the child: 'Leave him! We can offer you life!'

GREGERS (*swiftly*). Yes? What do you think she would reply?

HJALMAR. If I were to ask her: 'Hedvig will you sacrifice your life for me?' — (*He laughs scornfully.*) Oh, yes! You'd hear what answer she'd give me!

*A pistol shot is heard from the loft.*

GREGERS (*cries joyfully*). Hjalmar!

HJALMAR (*enviously*). Oh, now he's started hunting.

GINA (*enters, worried*). Oh, Hjalmar, grandfather's banging away in there on his own.

HJALMAR. I'll go and have a look.

GREGERS (*alive, excited*). Wait! Do you know what that was?

HJALMAR. Of course I do.

GREGERS. No, you don't. But I know. It was the proof you wanted.

HJALMAR. What proof?

GREGERS. A child's sacrifice. She has got your father to shoot the wild duck.

HJALMAR. Shoot the wild duck?

GINA. What an idea!

HJALMAR. But why?

GREGERS. She wanted to sacrifice for you the most precious of her possessions, because she thought that then you would have to love her again.

HJALMAR (*gently, emotionally*). Oh, child, child!

GINA. The things she gets up to!

GREGERS. She only wanted you to love her again, Hjalmar. She couldn't live without it.

GINA (*almost in tears*). There, Hjalmar, you see.

HJALMAR. Where is she, Gina?

GINA (*sniffs*). Sitting outside in the kitchen, I suppose, poor child.

HJALMAR (*walks across and flings open the kitchen door*). Hedvig, come here. Come and talk to me. (*Looks round*.) No, she isn't here.

GINA. She must be in her room, then.

HJALMAR (*outside*). No, she isn't there, either. (*Comes back*.) She must have gone out.

GINA. Well, you didn't want to have her in the house.

HJALMAR. Oh, I wish she'd come home again soon, so that I can tell her! Now everything will be all right, Gregers. Now I think we can start life afresh.

GREGERS (*quietly*). I knew it. Through the child will come resurrection.

OLD EKDAL appears in the doorway of his room. He is in full uniform, and is busy buckling on his sword.

HJALMAR (*amazed*). Father! Have you been in there?

GINA. Have you been shooting in your room?

EKDAL (*indignantly, comes closer*). So you go hunting alone now, do you, Hjalmar?

HJALMAR (*confused*). Then it wasn't you who fired that shot in the loft?

EKDAL. Wasn't me? Hm!

GREGERS (*cries to HJALMAR*). Hjalmar! She has shot the wild duck herself!

HJALMAR. What's going on around here?

*He runs over to the door of the loft, pulls it open, looks in and cries.*

Hedvig!

GINA (*runs over to the door*). Oh, God! What is it?

HJALMAR (*goes inside*). She's lying on the floor.

GREGERS. Lying on the floor? Hedvig?

*He joins HJALMAR inside.*

GINA (*simultaneously*). Hedvig!

*She goes into the loft.*

Oh, no, no, no!

EKDAL (*laughs*). Now she's started hunting too!

HJALMAR, GINA and GREGERS drag HEDVIG into the studio. Her right hand is hanging down with the pistol tightly clasped between her fingers.

HJALMAR (*distraught*). The pistol's gone off! She's shot herself! Call for help! Help!

GINA (*runs out into the passage and calls down*). Relling!

Relling! Dr Relling! Come upstairs! As quick as you can!

HJALMAR and GREGERS lay HEDVIG on the sofa.

EKDAL (*quietly*). The forest has taken its revenge.

HJALMAR (*on his knees beside her*). She's coming round now!

She'll be all right!

GINA (*comes back*). Where's the wound? I can't see anything—

RELLING hurries in. MOLVIK follows, with no waistcoat or tie, and with his coat hanging open.

RELLING. What's happened?

GINA. They say Hedvig's shot herself.

HJALMAR. Come here and help us.

RELLING. Shot herself!

*He pushes the table aside and begins to examine her.*

HJALMAR (*lying on the floor, gazes up at him in anguish*). It can't be dangerous? Can it, Kelling? She's hardly bleeding at all. It can't be dangerous, can it?

RELLING. How did it happen?

HJALMAR. Oh, how do I know?

GINA. She was going to shoot the wild duck.

RELLING. The wild duck?

HJALMAR. The pistol must have gone off.

RELLING. Hm. I see.

EKDAL. The forest has taken its revenge. But I'm not afraid of it.

*He goes into the loft and closes the door behind him.*

HJALMAR. Well, Relling, why don't you say something?

RELLING. The bullet has entered her breast.

HJALMAR. But she'll be all right?

RELLING. Surely you can see that Hedvig is dead.

GINA (*bursts into tears*). Oh, my child, my child!

GREGERS (*hoarsely*). The bottom of the deep—!

HJALMAR (*jumps up*). Yes, yes, she must live! Oh, God bless you, Relling, only for a moment! Only long enough for me to tell her how much I loved her — always — always!

RELLING. The bullet entered her heart. Internal haemorrhage. She died instantaneously.

HJALMAR. And I drove her from me like an animal! And she crept into the loft in terror, and died there — because she loved me! (*Sobs.*) I can never atone for this — never tell her—! (*Clasps his hands and cries upwards.*) Oh — You up there — if You exist! Why have You done this to me?

GINA. Hush, hush, don't carry on like that. We had no right to keep her — I suppose—

MOLVIK. The child is not dead, but sleepeth.

RELLING. Rubbish!

HJALMAR (*becomes calm, goes across to the sofa and looks down at HEDVIG, with folded arms*). How stiff and still she lies!

RELLING (*tries to free the pistol from her fingers*). She's holding on to it so tightly. So tightly.

GINA. No, no, Relling, don't break her fingers. Let the pistol stay there.

HJALMAR. Let her sleep it.

GINA. Yes, let her. But the child mustn't lie here like a show. We'll take her into her own room. Help me, Hjalmar.

*HJALMAR and GINA pick HEDVIG up.*

HJALMAR (*as they carry her out*). Oh, Gina, Gina! How shall we live after this?

GINA. We must help each other. Now she belongs to both of us, you know.

MOLVIK (*stretches out his arms and mumbles*). Praised be the Lord! To dust thou shalt return! To dust thou shalt return!  
RELLING (*whispers*). Shut up, man. You're drunk.

HJALMAR and GINA carry the body out through the kitchen door. RELLING shuts it behind them. MOLVIK slinks out into the passage.

RELLING (*goes over to GREGERS and says*). No one's ever going to make me believe that this was an accident.

GREGERS (*who has stood overcome by horror, shaking convulsively*). No one will ever know how this dreadful thing happened.

RELLING. The powder had burned her dress. She must have pressed the pistol against her breast before she fired.

GREGERS. Hedvig has not died in vain. Did you see how grief set free all that is most noble in him?

RELLING. Most men are noble when they stand by a death-bed. But how long do you think this nobility will last?

GREGERS. For as long as he lives. And it will grow, and grow.

RELLING. In nine months, little Hedvig will be nothing more to him than a theme for a recitation.

GREGERS. You dare say that about Hjalmar Ekdal!

RELLING. Let's talk about it again when the first grasses have withered on her grave. Then you'll hear him gulping about 'the child untimely ripped from her father's bosom'. You'll see him stewing in emotion and self-admiration and self-pity. Just you wait.

GREGERS. If you are right and I am wrong, life is not worth living.

RELLING. Oh, life would be all right if we didn't have to put up with these damned creditors who keep pestering us with the demands of their ideals.

GREGERS (*stares ahead of him*). In that case, I am glad that my destiny is what it is.

RELLING. And what, if I may ask, is your destiny?

GREGERS (*as he goes towards the door*). To be the thirteenth at table.

RELLING laughs and spits.

## Note on the Translation

*The Wild Duck* is, after *Little Eyolf*, the most difficult of Ibsen's prose plays to translate. Hjalmar, Gregers and Gina have particularly idiosyncratic mannerisms of speech which are most awkward to render. Hjalmar talks pretentiously, for ever starting sentences he cannot finish, mixing his metaphors, wandering into cliché and indulging in extravagant romanticizing and self-pity. It is always tempting when dealing with a ridiculous character to pare down his absurdities, but it is a temptation that must be resisted: his ridiculousness must be given full play; it is a baroque role for a baroque actor. Gregers is part political fanatic, part evangelist, and has acquired the worst rhetorical characteristics of both. He, like Hjalmar is full of other people's phrases. Gina is even more of a problem. Her speech is lower-class, and lower-class dialogue is especially difficult to translate because any real equivalent in English has strong regional associations. A Norwegian woman cannot talk Cockney or North Country, and one is forced to compromise with a rough unlocalized speech which necessarily loses some of the richness of the original. In the Norwegian she frequently lapses into Malapropisms ('*pigsul* for *pistol*, *den intricata fordin gen* for *den ideal a fordin gen*, the ideal demand), but Malapropisms in English are death to any dialogue except that of farce, and I have not tried to convey them. The phrase *havsen s land* which Gregers uses in Act Three to describe the bottom of the sea, and which Hedvig says is the phrase she always calls to mind when she thinks of the loft, presents considerable difficulties. It has overtones of both infinity and oblivion; Gregers mutters it hoarsely to himself in the last act when he realizes that Hedvig is dead, and in that context it epitomizes the choice she has made. In Norwegian it is an antique phrase, something like 'the vasty deep', but there is no equivalent in English with both the antiquity and the overtones; I have chosen to sacrifice the antiquity and call

it 'the bottom of the deep'. (In the original version of this translation I used 'the deep blue sea', but the phrase never sounded right.) The overriding essential is that its significance should be clear when Gregers uses it at the climax of the play.

I again gladly acknowledge my debt to Mr Casper Wrede for much minute criticism and more valuable suggestions than I can list.

M.M.